

Proponent Testimony for HB 2197

March 14, 2013

Rep. Barbara Bollier, MD

Good morning to you, committee and thank you, Chairman Siegfried for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you today. I stand before you as the parent of student athletes including one who is now a professional athlete. I am a strong supporter of changing the format of the board of the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) because of my experience as a parent of student athletes, my work on the Missouri side of the state line to make changes in decisions made by the Missouri State High School Activities Association, and my belief that the citizens of the state will be much better served by these changes in the law.

In Kansas we have local boards of education, a state board of education, Representatives, Senators, and a Governor, all elected to represent us in the state of Kansas. The only place we do not have fair representation of our voice is on the Kansas State High School Activities Association, an organization that controls all of the extra-curricular activities of our school children. What has resulted with the current organizational structure of KSHSAA is an agency that does not reflect the will of the parents of our school children. KSHSAA is operating without effective oversight by the elected bodies chosen to reflect the will of the people of Kansas.

I will briefly share some experiences of the swimming community that illustrate the need for a change in the current structure of KSHSAA. To be an elite level swimmer requires more practice than is currently provided by high schools in Kansas. For years, KSHSAA would not allow a swimmer to practice "extra" with another team during high school season. Many other states allow swimmers to train with their club teams and also compete for their high school teams. But KSHSAA controlled what our swimmers could do OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL TIME. Basketball players could shoot hoops anytime or anywhere, cross country runners could train more than the team, etc., but swimmers could not train with their club team, the only access they might have to pool time. The claim was that KSHSAA was "protecting our children from injury" by overuse, yet our children could swim that amount outside of the school season and not be injured! Bottom line, what right does an outside agency, hired by the state with NO parent representation, have to determine what our children do outside of the school setting?

You might ask why an elite-level athlete would want to compete for his or her high school. School is the center of the world for young people. Most of their friends attend their school, and most of their time is spent in that school. The opportunity to represent your school in competition and to help your teammates win is invaluable. Let's look at this current year following the Olympics; Missy Franklin, a four-time gold medalist and holder of the world

record in the 200 backstroke, swam for her high school. Clearly, Missy has been able to practice with her club team while competing for her high school in order to maintain her competitiveness against the elite swimmers of the world. I have included the following excerpts from an interview of Missy:

11. What's it like competing for club and high school teams?

Missy: I also have Nationals – and Stars and Regis team, but it's such a great opportunity, and I appreciate them all for different reasons. It's actually not that bad because my high school coach and club coach got together at the start of the season, got the calendar out, listed practices, dual meets, big meets and everything with Regis and Stars, and worked it out perfectly. So normally before big school meet, I'll go two days with Regis, to be with the relays. It actually worked out really well.

12. I covered the state championships of Colorado swimming many years. Is that part of the appeal, being part of a team and representing your school?

Missy: Yes. The opportunity to be able to help the team at state means the world to me.

How lucky for Missy that she did not live in Kansas! She would not have been able to swim for her high school...and how sad for her Kansas teammates that would not have had the opportunity to train with her and swim with her on the team. I can speak from my own life experience with my son who was not able to compete on his high school team; following his senior year in high school he did make the finals of the Olympic Trials and represented Kansas beautifully, but he missed out on the opportunity to compete for his high school. He recently started a coaching job with a high school team and his comment to me was, "Mom, I really want to do this because I never got the chance to be with a high school team." That comment made me even more committed to changing the structure of KSHSAA in Kansas.

I believe that the Kansas student-athletes should have the same opportunities that all student-athletes have in the United States. Our current activities association has not been willing to address the requests of parents, and not just swimming parents. The students of this state have the right to have fair representation on the KSHSAA board, and I urge you to vote for a change in the board structure.