

Testimony of Tony Sherman
Shawnee, KS
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Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 2197 and for your time and attention during our testimony.

The KSHSAA has indicated that over the last three decades they have operated a governance model that other states desire to emulate. I suggest using the same model for more than twenty years in any organization promotes a stagnant environment. While change is typically coupled with risk and met with resistance, stagnation is often more damaging to an organization. Change in a self-governing organization is difficult as those in power want to maintain their power and keep their policies in place.

Experts agree Boards consisting of more diverse backgrounds and perspectives foster more openness to new ideas and healthier debates. This can lead to beneficial changes. Better end user services and decisions can result when including formal input and feedback from all stakeholders in schools, including parents. The Association views local school officials as their customers. In the future, parents in positions of representation may be more likely to seek formal feedback from parents and students, providing another source of data directly from the real end users and customers.

The mission statement of the Association states specifically, “KSHSAA is best governed by representatives of the member schools and its affiliated organizations”. There are two observations to draw from this statement. First, the Association’s view of a member school is almost exclusively school administrators. Second, the Association does not truly welcome outside influence or information in its decision making.

Also from the mission statement; “Our Association is strengthened by equity and diversity”. This bill provides diversity and is a step toward greater equality to all members of the schools of Kansas, including parents and students.

The Association will likely indicate several areas through which they claim parents and students have access into the system. These avenues may exist on paper, but it does not mean they actually make a difference. As an example, you have written testimony today from a young man who was a member of the Student Advisory Board. His testimony explains how he felt brushed aside on several occasions during his tenure. He expresses the Student Advisory Board was simply symbolic in nature and not a meaningful avenue for student feedback. He supports this bill knowing it can make a real difference in the representation of the students and parents in Kansas.

In reality, it does not matter how many doors the Association has installed in its home if they are all locked inside with the only set of keys. The Association can listen to all the input in the world, but they still have an organization built for controlling the outcome.

This bill takes the step to provide accountability and visibility to local non-school affiliated representatives at the league level and four legislative appointees at the Executive Board level.

This bill is about improving the structure of the Association, nothing more. It has nothing to do with any other interactions the other proponents or myself have had with the Association in the past. We are here to discuss representation and processes in regards to high school activities, not the pro's and cons of a specific sport. No matter which direction the opponents attempt to pull the debate, they should ultimately be able to answer the question: "**Is this bill in the best interests of students and families?**" A school does not exist with an administration alone. It is the students and parents who support it that make a school complete.

Although I have no children of my own, I understand the importance of parental involvement in one's life. The specific topic of school activities is near to my heart as I have always had a passion for sports and recognize the importance of scholastic arts in society as a whole. A school does not exist with an administration alone. It is the students and parent stakeholders who support it that make a school complete. If you believe this as I do, then you must support this bill.