

Testimony by Nancy Fritz
House Bill 2023
Senate Committee on Commerce
February 4, 2013

Madame Chair, members of the Committee, my name is Nancy Fritz. I am a school library-media specialist and serve as President of the Shawnee Mission NEA. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I encourage your opposition to HB 2023. This bill is discriminatory; placing restrictions on public sector employees which do not exist in the private sector. Currently automatic deductions are available in our district for health insurance, separate ones for cancer, dental, and eye insurance, deposits to IRA's and TSA's, the United Way, and the district's Education Fund. As yet, no laws are proposed to limit any of those.

At what point do the state's tax dollars become another person's hard earned monies that they can spend however they choose? Why does government think that teachers need help in how they spend their hard-earned salaries?

HB 2023 implies that somehow Kansas NEA and the local chapters hoodwink new teachers, coercing them into joining. This would indicate that the same people who have passed rigorous screenings and qualifying exams which document their competence to educate our children, don't read the documents they sign, and cannot manage the paychecks they have earned.

I have heard testimony before the House subcommittee that local Kansas NEA representatives place undue pressure on teachers to join, and that teachers who do not join are ill-treated in schools. These strong-arm tactics, much like the threatening thugs who were rumored to show up when this bill came before the House, simply do not exist. Testimony last week specifically cited practices in Shawnee Mission, my local. Here is what actually happens:

New teachers are invited to a box lunch which is ALWAYS optional. There we explain the work that we do. Anyone who just wants the lunch, but does not choose to stay, can do so. During the afternoon, the district hosts a Benefits Fair. NEA-Shawnee Mission has a table there, alongside chiropractors offering free chair massages, and dental insurers handing out free toothbrushes. If a new teacher stops at our table, volunteer teacher-members explain what we do, and how much it costs. Sometimes we hand out chocolate chip cookies, which may seem to be a strong-arm technique to some people.

We work with our district, providing a liaison between administrators and teachers, filling in gaps where training might be needed, and providing information and support. We don't protect bad teachers--we don't want them in the classroom any more than you do!

This bill places government restrictions where none are needed. It will cost our district many hours to change a system that is not currently an expense. It places a stumbling block before voluntary membership. Teaching is hard enough. Please do not make it more difficult to be a member of an association that supplies support to educators. Please vote against this bill.