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**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 70  
Background checks and licensure of teachers**

**Presented to the House Education Committee  
By Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt**

**March 18, 2015**

Chairman Highland and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share this written testimony in support of Senate Bill 70.

The provisions laid out in Senate Bill 70 are consistent with the policy objective laid out in many other state laws that those individuals who have regular contact with children should undergo a criminal background check.

The State Board of Education has for many years by regulation required new teacher license applicants to submit fingerprints and undergo a Kansas Bureau of Investigation and Federal Bureau of Investigation background check. Last year, the Board extended that regulation to veteran teachers renewing their licenses. This bill would codify that system and extend the background checks to non-teacher employees of school districts who have regular contact with children.

The current statute regarding background checks for teachers is inconsistent with other background check laws, in that it places the burden on local prosecutors to notify the state Board of Education if a teacher has committed a crime that would preclude that teacher from holding a teaching license. This bill would place that burden on the licensed teacher or other school district employee to report those violations. Failure to do so would result in a class B misdemeanor.

The KBI's background check system has been proven reliable. Using that system, once a teacher or other school employee has been fingerprinted and a background check conducted, an alert will be generated if that individual subsequently commits a crime for which his or her license should be revoked.

Keeping Kansas children safe has been a strong priority for my administration as attorney general. This bill represents a good, common-sense step to ensure the safety of our children's learning environments. I urge the committee to support the bill.

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