

Kansas Families for Education

Demanding Excellent Education for All Children

**Testimony – House Bill 2531
House Education Committee
February 9, 2016**

Thank you, to Chairman Highland and to this committee for giving me the opportunity to speak. My name is Brian Koon, and I am the legislative liaison for Kansas Families for Education, a statewide, nonprofit, nonpartisan, pro-public education organization representing students in Kansas Public Schools and their parents.

I stand in opposition of House Bill 2531, a bill which would silence some of the most important members of our state: technical and community college instructors. Under this law, instructors could be fired for disagreeing with administration, occupying a position an administrator would prefer to give a friend or relative, or for no reason at all: that is the nature of removing job protections.

Compromising the independence of instructors by removing the protections of due process, results in instructors beholden not to academic standards or the curriculum, but to the hover-parents of students upset by low grades, or to the students themselves who may not be academically or intellectually competent to continue further in their vocation of choice. Instructors at this level play an important quality control function for society, but they will be hampered in this role if they lose due process.

I have heard complaints from critics of public education as to the low quality of graduates from high school on up, but in taking due process protections away from instructors, this committee will increase the number of falsely or over-certified workers and students continuing into a four year college. Instructors could be pressured, whether by politically connected parents, or micromanaging administrators, to give passing grades or professional certifications to students who are unqualified to have them. We as a society will be left wondering if the person with whom we are doing business really knows all that they're supposed to: everyone from nurses, to auto mechanics, to welders, and law enforcement, are taught at, and graded by, independent technical and community college instructors. Whether a person graduating from a program becomes an x-ray technician or a police officer, the ramifications of potentially diluting the certification process can have lethal consequences to the public at large.

As is all too common, this measure appears to be a House Bill in search of a problem - and there are problems in higher education, but this bill seeks to obsess over the warts with a heavy-handed solutions, while the patient is bleeding out from underfunding.

Perhaps the greatest argument against HB 2531, is HB 2506 from 2014, which, among other things, removed due process rights from K-12 teachers in Kansas. Since that time, the teaching

profession in this state has suffered from low morale, with publicized flight by teachers to other states, notably Missouri, where working conditions are better. So when this committee takes up a measure that would have many of the same effects as that bill - to further strip due process rights from the next group of targeted educators, with all the negative side effects - I take notice. Missouri also takes notice that another batch of high quality educational employees will be coming their way again.

Due process works. It does not guarantee employment the way tenure does. Due process provides the safety net that educators need to advocate for their students without risking their careers, while providing a roadmap for administrators to follow if the educator in question is not fulfilling their obligations.

To conclude, I urge each of you on behalf of students all across this state, to vote against HB 2531, and help maintain the integrity of our educational system.

With that, I'd like to thank the chair and the committee for their time and consideration.