

House Committee on Judiciary
Testimony of Charles W. Merrifield, Ph.D.
Hearing: Tuesday, February 2, 2016, 3:30 pm, 112-N

Position – OPPOSE SB 56

Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee,

I have read SB 56, and I have examined the historical and political context of the bill. The bill appears to be an attempt to protect Kansas children from nude imagery that is deemed to be harmful to children. To achieve this goal, removing affirmative defense for schools is advocated. However, the schools of Kansas have been responsible protectors of our children, and few, if any, cases have occurred in which schools wrongly exposed children to nude images. Existing law already provides penalties for cases that exceed the normal school context. Hence, SB 56 is unneeded to accomplish its stated goal.

However, SB 56 has at least one unstated goal, and that is to intimidate teachers and schools from having comprehensive sex education classes. The bill is an attempt to short circuit other legislation that is being considered in the Kansas Legislature that concerns issues related to sex education in the schools, such as HB 2199.

As the research evidence consistently demonstrates that comprehensive sex education in the schools reduces teen pregnancies and the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, I oppose SB 56.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Charles W. Merrifield". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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