

Testimony Before the
Senate Education Committee

Senate Bill 323

G.A. Buie, Executive Director, United School Administrators of Kansas (USA|KS)

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Chairman Abrams and members of the Senate Education committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We stand neutral.

I am G.A. Buie, the Executive Director of the United School Administrators of Kansas. Please indulge me for a minute as I provide a few credentials. Prior to accepting this role, I spent 24 years in Kansas schools, five in the classroom and the last 19 as a middle and high school principal. I also served on the board of directors and President of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, an organization that represents and supports over 100,000 principals across the nation and abroad.

My last five years were spent at Eudora High School, where I'm proud to say, has one of the strongest schoolr based mental health programs in the state, thanks in part to a couple of federal grants, designed to support the health and well being of students in our community.

With that being said, please take my testimony as a dedicated student advocate speaking on behalf of the school administrators across Kansas.

Please let me assure you, our organizations don't disagree with supporting staff in the area of suicide awareness and prevention. As an individual who has worked in four different school districts, I know training can and will look different in each district but more importantly training is occurring.

I also know the districts are currently doing more than suicide prevention with these annual trainings, they are providing Mental Health Awareness Training. School employees are more inr touch and equipped then 25 years ago, to deal and manage with the challenges that trickle into schools. Districts are intentional in walking building staff through a variety of activities and behaviors educating staff on "indicators of risk" that students exhibit. The support for students might look different yearr tor year depending on the community resources available, but the role of the school employee and the reporting process can remain consistent.

We know many, if not all districts, are addressing mental health training through their individual district crisis plans. Although we are not supportive of a mandate that requires suicide prevention training, we support KSDE working with school district mental health specialist to craft a protocol to support mental health awareness training for all staff members, which would include suicide prevention. We firmly believe the program, length of the training and the provider should be left to the school district to design utilizing the resources within their schools, regional service centers and communities.

I'll be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.