



Office of General Counsel

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To: Senate Education Committee

Re: Written testimony regarding SB 323 (neutral)

Senator Abrams and Members of the Committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to share the current efforts of the Kansas State Department of Education and the State Board of Education to ensure every school employee in the State of Kansas receives appropriate training in youth suicide awareness and prevention. While both the Department and the Board commend the goals of SB 323, we are already working on measures that extend beyond what is called for in this legislation.

On October 13th Helen Rentz, who had just lost her granddaughter to suicide, asked the State Board what assistance it could give to schools. On December 3rd Commissioner of Education Randy Watson met with the State Child Death Review Board, staff from the Attorney General's Office, and Clark Flatt to discuss adopting the Jason Flatt Act in Kansas. As a result of that meeting, KSDE staff has been working with the Office of the Attorney General to find the best means of accomplishing the goals of the Jason Flatt Act. We believe the State Board can best serve schools by adding provisions of the Jason Flatt Act to the current school accreditation regulations. A copy of that proposed regulation is attached to this letter.

One significant difference between the proposed State Board regulation and SB 323 is the target audience. SB 323 would require all licensed teachers and principals to receive training. KSDE believes that all school employees should receive training, not just those that are professionally licensed. KSDE also believes that training is not enough. We will ask the State Board to require building crisis plans that appropriately prepare school staff for signs of, and reactions to, youth suicide. Building crisis plans generally include steps for recognizing and responding to suicide ideation, appropriate methods of intervention, and crisis recovery plans in case something else does occur. Such plans are already in place in many school districts, and KSDE may use these to create model plans for schools throughout the state.

The Kansas State Department of Education respectfully requests that this Committee allow the State Board of Education to fulfill its constitutionally-given obligation of determining what is best for Kansas schools. Allow the State Board to assist Kansas schools through regulation rather than legislation.

R. Scott Gordon
General Counsel
KSDE

Attachment 1 – Regulation to be presented to the State Board of Education in February. (new text underlined)

K.A.R. 91-31-32

91-31-32 Performance and quality criteria.

(a) Each school shall be assigned its accreditation status based upon the extent to which the school has met the performance and quality criteria established by the state board in this regulation.

(b) The performance criteria shall be as follows:

(1) Except as provided in subsection (d), having met the percentage prescribed by the state board of students performing at or above the proficient level on state assessments or having increased overall student achievement by a percentage prescribed by the state board;

(2) having 95% or more of all students and 95% or more of each student subgroup take the state assessments;

(3) having an attendance rate equal to or greater than that prescribed by the state board; and

(4) for high schools, having a graduation rate equal to or greater than that prescribed by the state board.

(c) The quality criteria shall consist of the following quality measures, which shall be required to be in place at each school:

(1) A school improvement plan that includes a results-based staff development plan;

(2) an external technical assistance team;

(3) locally determined assessments that are aligned with the state standards;

(4) formal training for teachers regarding the state assessments and curriculum standards;

(5) 100% of the teachers assigned to teach in those areas assessed by the state or described as core academic subjects by the United States department of education, and 95% or more of all other faculty, fully certified for the positions they hold;

(6) policies that meet the requirements of S.B.R. 91-31-34;

(7) local graduation requirements that include at least those requirements imposed by the state board;

(8) curricula that allow each student to meet the regent's qualified admissions requirements and the state scholarship program;

(9) programs and services to support student learning and growth at both the elementary and secondary levels, including the following:

- (A) Computer literacy;
- (B) counseling services;
- (C) fine arts;
- (D) language arts;
- (E) library services;
- (F) mathematics;
- (G) physical education, which shall include instruction in health and human sexuality;
- (H) science;
- (I) services for students with special learning needs; and
- (J) history, government, and celebrate freedom week. Each local board of education shall include the following in its history and government curriculum:
 - (i) Within one of the grades seven through 12, a course of instruction in Kansas history and government. The course of instruction shall be offered for at least nine consecutive weeks. The local board of education shall waive this requirement for any student who transfers into the district at a grade level above that in which the course is taught; and
 - (ii) for grades kindergarten through eight, instruction concerning the original intent, meaning, and importance of the declaration of independence and the United States constitution, including the bill of rights, in their historical contexts, pursuant to L. 2013, ch. 121, sec. 2 and amendments thereto. The study of the declaration of independence shall include the study of the relationship of the ideas expressed in that document to subsequent American history;
- (10) programs and services to support student learning and growth at the secondary level, including the following:
 - (A) Business;
 - (B) family and consumer science;
 - (C) foreign language; and
 - (D) industrial and technical education; and
- (11) local policies ensuring compliance with other accreditation regulations and state education laws; and
- (12) programming for all school staff regarding suicide awareness and prevention. Each local board of education shall include the following in its suicide awareness and prevention programming:

_____ (A) at least one (1) hour of training each calendar year based on programs approved by the state board of education. The training may be satisfied through independent self-review of suicide prevention training material; and

_____ (B) a building crisis plan developed for each school building. The building crisis plan shall include:

(i) steps for recognizing suicide ideation;

(ii) appropriate methods of intervention; and

(iii) crisis recovery plan

(d) If the grade configuration of a school does not include any of the grades included in the state assessment program, the school shall use an assessment that is aligned with the state standards.