

March 22, 2016

Written Testimony in Favor of HB 2468

Kati Thul, Parent and 4H Club Leader

I am the mother of a 4H Shooting Sports team member. My son, Caden, has been a member of the Sedgwick County 4H Shooting Sports team for the past 5 years. He started with the BB gun discipline and now shoots both BB gun and Air Rifle. His membership with the shooting sports team has been an extremely positive one. As a young boy that was not interested in sports such as football and basketball, shooting sports became his lifesaver. Caden has grown in his amount of self-confidence and maturity. He also has been afforded many opportunities through shooting sports—he has met wonderful kids and made many friends. He has traveled and competed in the National BB Gun competition in Rogers, Arkansas, twice. Having attended many competitions, I can attest to the fact that the safety taken at the matches is of the highest quality. The range officers, coaches, shooters, and spectators follow strict rules at each competition. My child has learned gun safety and how to properly handle a firearm.

I am also an elementary school principal. I had asked my Board of Education and Superintendent for permission to use our school district facilities for the state shooting competition...and I was denied for the obvious reason that no guns are allowed on school property. I understood the decision, although I disagree with it. I have seen the benefits of the shooting sports program with my own son and wish that the school districts could promote a safe, alternative program for students that do not participate in the typical sports programs that are offered. I see shooting sports as a sport----and an extremely safe one. Passing this bill would benefit many students and allow them a venue to use, which in turn would promote alternatives to typical sports. As our new Commissioner of Education, Dr. Randy Watson, has stated, 4H teaches many soft skills to kids, such as endurance, integrity, honesty, and self-worth. We need to promote the involvement of youth in 4H activities and HB 2468 would allow more youth to participate.