

**House Education Committee
Written Testimony on HB 2573**

Submitted by John Allison, Superintendent, Olathe
on behalf of Olathe Public Schools USD 233 and USD 229 Blue Valley Schools

February 11, 2020

Chairman Huebert and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2573, a bill that would require students to pass an American civics test to graduate from high school. Though our districts believe that civics education is important, our districts oppose this bill for several reasons.

HB 2573 would create a new, high-stakes testing requirement for civics that would:

- create an additional barrier to high school graduation and
- place greater emphasis on the test instead of the learning experience.

Civics is currently a graduation requirement for Kansas students. Students are required to demonstrate an understanding of knowledge acquired through a combination of experiences including, but not limited to, testing and completion of projects. This learning design is consistent with that of other academic courses require for graduation.

This bill creates an additional barrier to high school graduation. A new, high-stakes testing requirement could be especially problematic for students with learning disabilities and for those students who struggle with test-taking in general. A student's inability to pass the exam successfully could negatively impact their ability to seek employment or other educational opportunities.

Finally, our civics education programs encourage more than just the memorization of facts. In addition to acquiring a working knowledge of government, history, law, and democracy, programs encourage civic participation and engagement. We believe that this type of learning experience is more likely to accomplish the goal of preparing students to be informed and engaged citizens than implementing a high-stakes graduation requirement.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at jallison@olatheschools.org or (913) 780-8022.