



Oral opponent testimony before the

Senate Committee on Education

on

SB 410, requiring publication of bullying policies; report on bullying incidents at each attendance center.

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Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

KASB appears as an opponent today to **SB 410**.

I'd like to begin by noting our legislative policy position on bullying, adopted by our Delegate Assembly on December 8, 2019:

"Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in Kansas public schools. Proposed changes in state anti-bullying law and regulations should retain flexibility for local boards to implement policies and include support for professional development and programming promoting **prevention and restoration** [emphasis added] to supplement the district's disciplinary response to bullying behaviors."

KASB and its member school districts are committed to working proactively to address the root causes of bullying in schools. We regretfully feel, however, that SB 410 in its current form does not accomplish that goal.

As you know, the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Bullying met across the state in 2019 to gather testimony and learn about best practices to address the impact of bullying on our students. KASB was represented on the Task Force by our President-Elect, Lori Blake (Southeast of Saline USD 306) and KASB General Counsel Donna Whiteman, a respected former legislator and former SRS Secretary. Legislators included Chairwoman Baumgardner, Senator Sykes, and Representatives Dietrich and Benson. State Board member Jean Clifford also served on the Task Force. Numerous other stakeholder groups were represented as well.

The task force delivered its recommendations to the Kansas State Department of Education in December 2019; this committee also received a briefing earlier this session.

The Task Force's recommendations, summarized very briefly, were: better support and direction for school districts; continue and develop efforts around social-emotional learning to address school bullying; examine the state law and determine if it requires reconsideration; that local policies must focus on relationships, school culture, and the mental health impact of bullying in schools; better data

through measures such as the Kansas Communities That Care survey; addressing cyberbullying; and training, professional development and teacher preparation.

The recommendations have been forwarded to the School Mental Health Advisory Committee for more work and for potential proposals to the legislature. The Advisory Committee is presided over by State Board of Education Chair Kathy Busch.

KASB supports posting bully prevention plans and procedures on school district websites, as is required in current law. We respectfully suggest, however, that the Task Force's recommendations reach far beyond the reporting requirements envisioned in this legislation. The recommendations focus instead on a more holistic approach to the causes and impacts of school bullying and how boards, administrators and teachers can and should respond to those factors. We regret to say we believe SB 410 represents a piecemeal approach to a much larger issue. While our position will no doubt be unpopular with some, we respectfully urge the Committee and the legislature to defer to the School Mental Health Advisory Committee and its continuing work on this heartbreaking but complicated issue before enacting potential legislation.

We pledge to work with our partners across the state to address the scourge of school bullying but cannot support SB 410 as currently written.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify; I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.