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Committee on Education
Proponent Testimony on SB 235

Chairwoman Baumgardner and Members of the Education Committee,

SB 235 is a simple bill with the simple purpose of getting our kids back in school. Our lives have changed over the last year in ways we would never have imagined, and our children have unfortunately suffered a great deal from the challenges we've faced. They've been asked to sacrifice far too much in my view and it is time we put their interests first and get them back in the classroom and to a sense of normalcy.

As we all take the necessary steps to get back to normal, our first priority must be to ensure that every child in Kansas can have the option to return to full-time in-person learning. While remote learning was a great option as a short-term solution, over the long-term it is clear that the longer students rely on remote learning, the further they fall behind. Remote learning has also placed a major burden on parents, many of whom are begging us to restore full-time in-person learning as quickly as possible. Parents are seeing their children struggle and are rightly concerned how they will be able to make up this valuable time they are losing in the classroom.

Our kids need in-person interaction with their teachers, not with a screen. They need relationships, not isolation. As great as technology can be, nothing is truly a substitute from the in-person experience. And the good news is, we now know that in-person learning is safe. Our school districts have now had a year to develop protocols to ensure school attendance is as safe as possible, so it is time that our children return to the classroom and begin to return to normal.

In my State of the State response, I made it a point that I believe in trusting Kansans in the policies we enact. This means listening to and trusting our parents and our teachers and even our kids. It's time to trust them by providing all families in Kansas an option for in-person learning.

In the last week, since news of this bill came to light, I've been pleased to see several school districts take action to open even ahead of the date in the bill. This is encouraging, and I hope means we are finally heading in the right direction.

I appreciate your time today and I urge the committee to pass SB 235 to get Kansas kids back in the classroom.