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## **NEUTRAL IN-PERSON TESTIMONY ON HB 2494**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2024

SUBMITTED BY ANN MAH AND DR. DEENA HORST

Kansas State Board of Education Liaisons

Chairman Thomas and Committee Members:

Thank you for the hearing today on the important issues of school safety and security and cardiac emergency preparedness. While the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) supports the principles of giving guidance on safe and secure schools and cardiac emergency plans, we do not support the approach put forward in HB 2494. Therefore, we are neutral on the bill.

In fact, the KSBE has a legislative position to expand funding for Safe and Secure Schools grants to better meet the safety needs of Kansas schools and students. Last year, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) received grant requests from 187 school districts totaling approximately \$12 million in support; considerably more than the \$5 million provided by the Legislature. We believe more districts would have applied for funding, except for the fact that so many of the requested amounts are denied. KSDE could effectively spend a much larger grant fund and we hope the Legislature will consider increasing the amount provided.

We believe the KSBE would agree with school districts having a cardiac emergency response plan and adequate AEDs, and we would support those plans or training in any way we can. However, KSDE does not have staff with the expertise to develop or manage the implementation of medical plans. That would be the purview of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Also, the Kansas High School Activities Association already has guidelines in place that cover some of the sports-related issues addressed in the bill. We also would caution against any unfunded mandates.

The issues involved with ensuring safe and secure schools and those providing for cardiac emergencies involve different agencies, different kinds of oversight, and different expertise. For those reasons, we believe the best way to move forward is to divide HB 2494 into two bills.

We do understand the intent of putting cardiac emergency response with safe and secure schools. However, it is not clear that the Legislature needs to codify the guidelines for safe and secure schools, as the grants have been in budget provisos since 2018. Also, the KSBE already has guidelines in place and is best positioned to ensure they are updated on a timely basis. In any case, we would be glad to work with the Committee on their concerns in this area.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.