

Testimony of McPherson County Health Department to the
House Committee on Judiciary
Proponent for HB 2754
February 19, 2024

Dear Chair Humphries and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written proponent testimony on HB 2754.

This bill would amend K.S.A. 19-101a to authorize counties to use home rule powers to exempt from conducting school sanitary inspections. Those inspections are defined in K.S.A. 65-202 and require the county's Local Health Officer to make a sanitary inspection of each school building and grounds upon the opening of each fall term of school and to make such additional inspections as necessary.

This bill would restore the ability of the Board of County Commissioners to work with stakeholders in their community to determine whether such inspections are done by the Local Health Officer or by others. This was a long-standing local decision-making authority that was unnecessarily changed in the 2020 special session.

McPherson County Health Department doesn't have the means to conduct valuable, productive sanitary inspections of each school building in McPherson County. After the 2020 special session, Local Health Departments across the state scrambled to find training and guidance on how to conduct such inspections. Through our investigation, we realized that our school buildings already participate in a variety of inspections each year and any inspection that we would be able to provide would be a nuisance. There is nothing on our self-generated inspection forms that isn't already covered by another stakeholder. McPherson County would opt out of requiring the Local Health Officer to conduct school sanitary inspections for this reason. It is not a practical use of resources nor is there a standard set to guide Local Health Officers in completing such inspections.

I ask that you give the power back to the Board of County Commissioners and allow localities to determine if their school buildings are being inspected appropriately and if so, opt out accordingly. If localities determine their school buildings are not being inspected properly, allow the Local Health Officer to establish such inspections. Each county is unique. Please replace this blanket requirement with HB 2754 and allow us to tailor our resources to our county's needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this discussion.

Respectfully,

Shalei Shea RN BSN
Director and Health Officer
McPherson County Health Department