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HB2236 - Written Opponent Testimony
9 March 2023

Dear Chair Baumgardner and members of the Senate Education Committee:

As a lifelong educator and President of the American Federation of Teachers - Kansas, I submit this written testimony in opposition to House Bill 2236

AFT Kansas and I fully support and encourage parents to take an active role in their child's education. As a parent of four adult children, my personal philosophy is the parent is the first educator of their child(ren). When my children were in public schools, I looked forward to hearing from my children's teachers. I constantly monitored their progress, communicated with their teachers', attended conferences/IEP meetings and all school events. I was very much an involved and hands-on parent.

With 32 years of classroom experience, I used many ways to communicate with my families to be very transparent to what was occurring in my classroom, to share samples of student work, track and review student progress, to have parent responses with open and honest communication from families. At school we held Open House and Math and Reading curriculum nights to demonstrate how families can work with the schools to ensure student success. Not to forget weekly newsletters, Parent/Teacher Conferences and emails and phone calls to families.

One can clearly see that parents currently have rights and open-door policies within Kansas public schools when it comes to their child's education. What is concerning with HB 2236 is that it allows parents to object to material, assignments, and subjects parents decide to be harmful. I ask what is harmful? Kansas has the Kansas State Board of Education and local boards work to put our student's best interests first and foremost. The meaning of education is the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction and education allowing students the opportunity to be exposed to material and topics we all experience in society.

School districts across the state already operate with policies put forth by their local school boards which outline some of the same rights as those outlined in HB 2236. These policies are public knowledge and can be found on district websites. These policies include but are not limited to:

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- *Policy JAA: Equal education opportunities:* School districts cannot discriminate on the basis of sex, religion, color, national origin or ancestry, handicap/disability, or age and provide how someone can submit inquires or concerns.
- *Policy IC: Educational Program:* Specifies that curricular offerings as well as educational goals and objectives are available for inspection.
- *Policy IKD: Religion in Curricular or School Sponsored Activities:* Outlines how students and staff members may be excused for participating in activities or practices contrary to their religious beliefs.
- *Policy IKDA: Religious objections to activities:* Outlines the process by which a parent or guardian should follow when requesting a student be excused from participating in activities for religious reasons.
- *Policy IF: Textbooks, Instructional Materials, and Media Centers:* Outlines the parameters and expectations for selection of materials as well as the process of for challenging textbooks, instructional materials, and media centers. “Any student, parent, or legal guardian of a student currently enrolled in the district having a complaint about textbooks, media center or other instructional materials shall meet with the teacher, media specialist or principal.”
- *Policy KN Complaints:* Provides parents with the methods by which they can submit complaints, including complaints about curriculum and instructional materials (KN).

There are many more policies which illustrate parents currently enjoy rights to their child’s education. Why do we not trust elected school board members? Why do we not trust our teachers? School boards enact policies to enhance student’s educational experience – to be successful and safe in their school. One small part of a teachers’ success is engaging families to help students be successful in the classroom. Parents have many rights before this type of legislation.

Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts and concerns regarding HB 2236. AFT Kansas believes districts and teachers already allow, and encourage parents to be involved in their child’s learning experience. This type of legislation is unnecessary and redundant. AFT Kansas requests you oppose the passage of House Bill 2236.

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