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## **Opponent Testimony – WRITTEN ONLY**

**HB 2236 - AN ACT concerning education; relating to school districts; establishing parents' right to direct the education and upbringing of their children including the right to object to educational materials and activities that are not included in approved curriculum or standards or impair a parent's beliefs, values or principles.**

**Presented to the Senate Committee on Education**

**Thursday, March 9, 2023**

**by**

**Ann Mah and Dr. Deena Horst, Legislative Liaisons**

**Kansas State Board of Education**

Chair Baumgardner, Vice-Chair Erickson, Ranking Minority Member Sykes and Committee Members:

The Kansas State Board of Education strongly encourages parental involvement in their child's education. Studies show that parent engagement equals a better educational outcome for the student. We believe parents are integral in their child's education starting in early childhood through adulthood. While we agree that parents should make education decisions that are best for their own children, this bill leaves many 'loose ends' that have the potential of producing chaos rather than orderly solutions to parental objection. Most can be resolved with an alternative assignment of the same rigor but that is not even a possible solution mentioned by HB 2236, instead, withdrawal from the class is the listed solution.

In fact, the bill raises far more questions than it answers. What is meant by the impairment of a parent's sincerely held belief, values, or principles? Is fact-finding allowed or is the parent's word the only measure? Who determines that impairment occurred? In fact, what is the definition of impairment as used in the bill? Who determines what is meant by 'sincerely held beliefs'? Why are we not determining alternative assignments of the same rigor instead of total withdrawal from a class? What if a parent objects to their child learning math or history, for whatever reason, and the student is unable to meet the state mathematics or history requirement for graduation because the parent(s) withdrew the child? Are schools mandated to waive that requirement for that one child? What if one parent determines an activity,

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assignment, or course content impairs their sincerely held belief, values, or principles and the other disagrees with the offended parent? Hasn't the statute placed school districts in an untenable situation?

As it seems it has become routine in recent years, such broad requirements are placed on public schools, but not on private schools which, with tax credit scholarships for at-risk students, will likely also experience parents who are in disagreement with assignments, etc. When will private school parents receive the same rights?

Thank you for allowing us to share our thoughts and concerns regarding HB 2236. We believe districts already allow parents to ask for alternatives, etc. and such requests are generally granted unless the request is unable to be met by the school and the district. Disagreements between school districts and parents/students should be and can be worked out on an individual basis rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all solution found in a statute. For the reasons previously indicated, we believe this bill is unnecessary and has the potential of causing unneeded and unnecessary adversarial relationships and will create distrust within communities and even within families; therefore, we ask that you oppose the passage of this bill.