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"Learning is the discovery that something is possible." Fritz Pearls

**House Committee on Education
Written Testimony In opposition to HB 2330**

Bullying is not a new thing, but no longer are the days of excusing those behaviors by saying "toughen up" or "boys will be boys." Bullying damages those that have it occur, and those that afflict it on others set themselves up for future failures. Rarely does a week go by that there is not an allegation of bullying that reaches my desk. I take each seriously, and I treat them all as if my child were the victim.

The investigative process is critical, and it begins with the first report of bullying. I question everyone that I believe can give factual evidence to help determine what has occurred. This is a very time consuming endeavor, and it is not unusual to spend hours on this step alone. With every witness, I not only ask for their input, I also take the time to coach them on how to best respond if they witness future bullying behaviors. We believe that everyone has a role in stopping bullying. You are either part of the solution or part of the problem. I follow the guidelines that are defined in KSA 72-8256 to determine if the action is in fact bullying, or if the incident falls under the "peer conflict" description. More often than not, student to student bullying reports are indeed peer conflict. However, when bullying occurs, it requires more school actions.

Bullying does necessitate corrective disciplinary action and restorative training. Discipline varies on the type of incident, but it frequently ranges from in school suspension to long-term suspension. Police involvement can also be part of the corrective process. I involve parents in the process, because the "bully" seeing that we all have the same expectations is the best way to extinguish the bullying behaviors. I also work hard to restore the relationship between the students. More often than not, these children will continue to be in the same buildings and teams for years to come. We teach them to see similarities with each other, and we teach them the benefits of treating all students with dignity and respect. Punishment alone does very little to solve these issues. Finally, administrators and counselors spend a great deal of time coaching kids on how to best advocate for themselves to avoid and solve potential bullying situations.

As a school and as a school district, we try to be as proactive as possible to limit the bullying situations. We have BOE policies that are shared and adhered to. We have an anti-bullying week in the fall, and we imbed character development skills throughout our lessons. Although we work diligently to stop bullying, our stance is that "anti-bullying" is the minimal expectation. We teach kids to go above and beyond to help others and make a positive difference in the lives of each other. Every day, we start our day with a "kindness boomerang" that encourages students and staff to do specific things to enrich the lives of those around them, because our charge as public educators is to help develop tremendous citizens.

Sincerely,

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