



Testimony on House Bill 2039 Senate Education Committee  
March 22, 2021

Members of the Senate Education Committee,

RE: HB2039

The Kansas Council for the Social Studies is disappointed to hear about the progression to the House floor of HB2039, requiring the successful passage of a multiple-choice civics test in order to graduate from a Kansas high school. While we agree on the need for an increased focus on Civics education, we disagree that a basic multiple-choice test will solve the perceived problem and so we oppose the use of valuable time and resources focused on this type of assessment. Kansas is leading the way in Social Studies education by transforming the teaching practices from rote memorization to high level analysis and critical thinking. HB2039 encourages an assessment that is a step back from the instruction and learning we know to be effective.

If this bill were to pass, high school students will spend time preparing for a test that does little to encourage active civic participation. We believe that training our students to think critically while supporting engaged and meaningful analysis of government policies, procedures, and documents provides a much deeper understanding and a more effective means of assessment than any multiple-choice test might create.

While we support the Education Committee's goal of creating engaged, informed, and knowledge citizens, we are concerned that the committee's members have failed to consult with social studies educators, curriculum experts, and district administrators to address their concerns. We believe that valuable class time is best used focused on research-based and established practices that ask students to master and apply civic principles. Rather than mandate drill and kill rote memorization techniques that do little more than activate a student's short-term memory, our hope is that the House and Senate trust the experts who are working every day in social studies and government classrooms who understand the power of a well-crafted instructional design.

The KCSS Executive Board and membership have extensive experience with the state level social studies curriculum, instructional best practice, and assessment and would love to begin a dialog on how best to improve civic engagement among Kansas students. Our students deserve more than just a memorized set of "right answers" in order to be active and informed citizens of this country. We strongly urge House and Senate members to vote against HB2039 while continuing to support research-based Civics instruction.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill Weber", is written over a horizontal line.

KCSS Executive Board and Members  
Jill Weber, President Elect 2021