



Oral opposition testimony on

HB 2700

Establishing the school library rating system task force to develop a rating system for materials available to students in public school libraries and requiring school districts to implement such rating system.

By

Angie Stallbaumer

Deputy Director and General Counsel

Kansas Association of School Boards

astallbaumer@kasb.org

To

House Education Committee

H.Education@house.ks.gov

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Chair Thomas and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to give testimony in opposition to HB 2700. KASB's member-adopted legislative resolutions and permanent policies address the provisions of this bill in numerous ways:

We support management of public schools under locally elected boards of education, including setting curriculum, staffing, financial management, and policies . . .

As the constitutional authority charged with the management of local schools, the school board is accountable to district patrons through the electoral process and must be the final authority on local management decisions . . .

We support the development of relationships among local teachers, students and families without additional, restrictive legislative oversight resulting in the diversion of time and money from the classroom to bureaucratic tasks.

KASB opposes efforts to directly or indirectly limit the board's ability to determine curriculum, library and other instructional materials.

Kansas Association of School Boards

1420 SW Arrowhead Rd, Topeka, KS 66604 • 785-273-3600 • www.kasb.org

As clearly expressed by our members, selection of learning materials is a matter assigned by the Kansas Constitution to locally elected boards of education, and evaluation and selection of library books falls squarely within these responsibilities. Local boards already have all the power and authority they need to craft and implement policies that address the professional expertise, community input, and learning objectives to be considered in the creation of library media collections in our public schools. The Legislature does not need to act in this area, nor should it.

Kansas districts have policies for acquiring library media materials, and for hearing and responding to any concerns that might be raised by staff, students, or parents about these materials. Local district policies balance educators' expertise on the appropriateness of materials for students with the input provided to districts by the communities that they serve.

Furthermore, there are a multitude of resources available, easily accessed with a Google search, for a parent to review in making the parent's own determination about the appropriateness of a particular book, magazine, or other material for that parent's child: e.g., Common Sense Media, Goodreads, Amazon book reviews, Biblionasium, ScreenitFirst.com, resources from the American Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children, among others. This bill would, instead, create a system that would impose the judgment of a group of nine appointed individuals—only one of whom would be required to have professional expertise in library media services—on what should instead be the decisions of thousands of locally elected board members, tens of thousands of licensed educators, and hundreds of thousands of public school students and their families.

The decisions about which materials are available in our public school libraries are already well-informed and thoroughly researched. Our state's policies should remain as they are, placing the responsibility for addressing these personal decisions between a parent and the parent's child, rather than restricting or placing unnecessary guardrails on access to information by other members of that child's school community.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask the committee to oppose this bill.

Thank you.

***KASB is a non-profit service organization built on an abiding belief in Kansas public schools.
We have put the needs of students and K-12 leaders first since 1917.***