

Morton County Health Department
625 Colorado St Elkhart, Ks 67950
P 620-697-2612 F 620-697-2790

Testimony on HB2754
Submitted to House Judiciary Committee
By Kendra Walsh, RN/Admin
Morton County Health Department
February 19, 2024

On behalf of Morton County Health Department and the citizens of our county, I appreciate the opportunity to provide this testimony on House Bill 2754. We are a proponent for this bill amendment.

This bill would amend K.S.A. 19-101a to authorize counties to use home rule powers to exempt from conducting school sanitary inspections. Those inspections are defined in K.S.A. 65-202 and require the county's local health officer to make a sanitary inspection of each school building and grounds upon the opening of each fall term of school and to make such additional inspections as are necessary. A long-standing, local decision-making authority was unnecessarily changed in the 2020 special session. This amendment would restore the ability of Boards of County Commissioners to work with stakeholders in their community to determine whether such inspections are done by the local health officer or by others.

Public Health Departments have cautiously maneuvered and endured a great many changes through the unknowns of a novel pandemic. Many of the Health Department heads also work as the local health officer, so this change and added responsibility came upon them without warning, but also without adequate training, guidance, format or explanations. If the safety of school inspections were an issue and the process of how it was previously done needed to change, that decision and conversations should involve local authorities to address the actual concerns, if there were any.

We ask that you support this bill by voting for it favorably from this Committee, and recommending its passage by the Kansas House and restore the decision making ability to the Local Boards of County Commissioners.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this discussion.

Respectfully,



Kendra Walsh, RN
Administrator
Morton County Health Department

