

February 1, 2024

Re: HB 2612

Members of the Committee,

Thank you for reading my testimony. I am neutral on this bill.

In theory, I support it, but I also believe it is nothing more than a solution in search of a problem.

I agree that Kansas school districts should comply with laws and regulations. I will be listening to the hearing on this bill for specific examples of districts where this is an issue. Given the high level of reporting and oversight public schools are required to maintain, I am curious to know what prompted this proposal.

To give its unnamed sponsors credit, I will assume that this bill was written to ensure the safety and academic quality of schools in Kansas. As a Kansan, I endorse the expectation of high standards in individual school buildings, at the district level, and at the state level. All any family wants for their child is the best possible education in the best possible environment. To that end, I believe that one minor change to the wording of this statute update will ensure that thousands of additional Kansas children will also benefit.

The first paragraph of the current statute reads as though only public schools and districts will be required to comply with all Kansas law, rules, and regulations. While the vast majority of quality schools in Kansas are, in fact, public schools and already subject to Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) surely ALL schools wishing to be KESA accredited should be required to comply with state laws, regulations, meet educational state standards, and have documented plans in place to do so. To allow some schools to be excluded from compliance puts children at risk. There are currently 26,395 children enrolled in Kansas' non-public Private Accredited School Districts, according to a report available on the KSDE website (See attached spreadsheet for a list of schools and enrollment.)

I encourage you to amend Section 1 to remove the word 'public' from the text of the statute to ensure any school seeking to be considered accredited in the state of Kansas is fully compliant with the laws and regulations its citizens deem necessary for the safety and educational success of its students.

Section 1. K.S.A. 2023 Supp. 72-5170 is hereby amended to read as follows: 72-5170. (a) (1) In order to accomplish the mission for Kansas education, the state board shall design and adopt a school district accreditation system based upon improvement in performance that equals or exceeds the educational goal set forth in K.S.A. 72-3218(c), and amendments thereto, and is measurable. The state board shall hold all school districts accountable through the Kansas education systems accreditation rules and regulations, or any successor accreditation system and accountability plan adopted by the state board. The state board also shall ensure that all school districts and the ~~public~~ schools operated by such districts have programs and initiatives in place for providing those educational capacities set forth in K.S.A. 72-3218(c), and amendments thereto. On or before January 15 of each year, the state board shall prepare and submit a report on the school district accreditation system to the governor and the legislature.

Kansas families benefit from detailed information about the buildings and educational outcomes of schools. If this committee believes that compliance with law and statute is an issue anywhere in Kansas schools and that this change to the wording of existing statute is necessary, then I encourage you to protect ALL Kansas school children and ensure compliance is not restricted to one category of schools or districts.

Finally, I do have some concern about the addition of (3)(C) to the statute. There is already a process in place for citizens to take concerns about public school compliance. Any citizen may approach his or

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her site council, school board member, or attend a school board meeting to raise concerns. Similarly, anyone can approach his or her Board of Education representative. While less robust by virtue of being non-public, I assume KESA compliant private school districts also have site counsels and all their citizens have Kansas Board of Education representatives. Given that accreditation is also cyclical and has to be renewed, it would seem there is already a compliance review process in place through re-accreditation. The additions to statute in this bill allowing individuals to “challenge...compliance or noncompliance” seem less like a resolution to a serious problem and more like an opportunity for muck-raking. I do wonder if this proposed “process”, is nothing more than a culture-war device that will bring out non-serious, poorly-informed “concerns” by outside parties similar to those we read about in other places with regards to library book complaints. Our accredited schools are serious places with serious work. Legitimate complaints about accredited public schools have several public paths for redress. If KESA standards do not already have a requirement for compliance concerns between reaccreditation cycles for non-public schools, then it ought to be developed to ensure that concerns about private school compliance has a process that is as transparent and rigorous as that of public schools.

Thank you for your consideration.

Erin Gould  
Roeland Park, Johnson County, Kansas

### Kansas K-12 Report Generator

I used the KSDE Data Central report tool and search criteria shown here find the report below.



**WARNING:** Because of the large volume of data being processed, these reports may take a while to generate.

Please select a report format:

Excel PDF Word HTML

Select a Report:

Headcount Enrollment (Totals Only)

Data Grouping:

Totals by District/Organization - All Public, Private, and/or State Schools (Select a Type of School Below)

Type of Schools:

Private Schools

Select a School Year:

2023-2024

Display Report Reset

**2023-2024  
STATE HEADCOUNT ENROLLMENT  
BY DISTRICT  
NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS**

State Totals

ORG. #	ORGANIZATION NAME	COUNTY NAME	SCHOOL YEAR	TOTAL
X0758	Heartspring	Sedgwick	2023-2024	52
Z0006	Brookridge Day School	Johnson	2023-2024	87
Z0009	Independence Bible School	Montgomery	2023-2024	89
Z0026	Lutheran Schools (Topeka)	Shawnee	2023-2024	967
Z0028	Dodge City Catholic Diocese	Ford	2023-2024	674
Z0029	Kansas City Catholic Diocese	Wyandotte	2023-2024	13033
Z0030	Salina Catholic Diocese	Saline	2023-2024	1961
Z0031	Wichita Catholic Diocese	Sedgwick	2023-2024	8829
Z0032	Lakemary Center Paola	Miami	2023-2024	71
Z0060	Accelerated Schools	Johnson	2023-2024	46
Z0064	Annoor Islamic School	Sedgwick	2023-2024	130
Z0066	Life Preparatory Academy	Sedgwick	2023-2024	412
Z0070	Branches Academy	Sedgwick	2023-2024	44