

Jason Anderson
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Re: HB 2612, Requiring school districts to be in compliance with all state laws and rules and regulations to be accredited and requiring the state board of education to establish a process to challenge determinations of such compliance

Position: Opposition Testimony
Date of Hearing: February 5, 2024

To the Honorable Members of the House Committee on K-12 Education Budget,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill No. 2612, a piece of legislation that, while ostensibly aimed at enhancing accountability within our education system, in practice exacerbates existing inequities between public and private schools. My concern stems not from the focus on accountability, but the principle that such measures be applied equitably across all educational settings that receive public funding.

HB 2612 mandates stringent compliance and accreditation processes for public schools without imposing similar requirements on private schools or homeschool environments. In such an inequitable landscape, public schools are subjected to rigorous scrutiny and penalization for non-compliance, while private institutions operate without parallel oversight. This selective application of accountability standards undermines the foundation of equitable education policy.

The proposed bill arrives at a time when there is a concerted effort to expand voucher programs that redirect public funds to private and homeschooling, without the accompanying accountability measures that one would expect when public funds are at stake. This not only diverts resources away from public schools but also grants private entities a competitive advantage by exempting them from the compliance burdens faced by their public counterparts. The lack of equivalent transparency and accountability for private schools poses a critical concern.

These efforts would collectively and permanently weaken the public school system. By imposing stringent accreditation requirements solely on public schools, we risk stigmatizing and delegitimizing these institutions in the eyes of the public. Such measures could inadvertently pave the way for a reallocation of funds to entities aligned with specific ideological or political agendas, rather than to those committed to providing a universally high standard of education.

I advocate for a system where accountability and improvement measures are uniformly applied across all educational institutions benefiting from public funding. This approach not only ensures fairness but also upholds the principle that all students, regardless of the type of school they attend, deserve access to quality education underpinned by rigorous standards of accountability and transparency.

While I support efforts to improve the accountability and quality of education in our state, such efforts must be equitable and inclusive of all education providers that potentially receive public funds. I urge the legislature to reconsider the provisions of HB 2612 and to work towards legislation that promotes fairness, transparency, and the universal application of accountability standards.

Sincerely,

Jason Anderson

Chairperson Williams and members of the K-12 committee,

Thank you for asking for written testimony for HB 2612. I am wanting to clear up any confusion of districts not following the laws in Kansas in our district. We spend a great deal of time in our district and in our written policies to make sure we are following the law of Kansas. I find it offensive that the chair would think to make public schools sound like they would break the laws of Kansas. We work very hard to follow all laws.

The State Board of Education spends a great deal of time trying to make sure our schools are continually getting better for our changing world. It is their established duty by the laws of Kansas to make sure schools are good enough to be accredited and your committee should be proud of the job the State Board of Education is doing to help school in Kansas get better every day. Kansas has a great education system that you should be proud of, as well. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

If we are talking about following the laws of Kansas, schools are doing an excellent job of fulfilling your wishes, but it took multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education which is in the constitution of Kansas. You are not being an example of what you want of the public schools. We only ask you to follow the laws that your institution made into law, fully fund public education and quit squabbling over your personal agendas. WE have students to educate and companies that are waiting for our students. We need you to follow the laws you made. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Sue Bolley

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Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Sincerely,

Stacy Boone

Feb 1, 2024

Written Testimony for HB 2612

Name: Dawn Brumbley

Title: Parent in Olathe Schools

Email address: dawnraeann@gmail.com

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: written only testimony OPPOSING HB 2612

Hearing Date: Feb 5, 2024

K12 Committee and Chair:

I am writing to encourage you to OPPOSE HB 2612 because it does not enforce standards on all K12 schools in Kansas and only applies to public schools even though schools all throughout Kansas public or private receive publicly funded tax dollars. Having the potential to remove accreditation for only public schools and not all schools sets a precedent that private education can take publicly funded dollars and maintain no accountability while public education can be targeted for accreditation loss. This would be harmful to our children, as more than 90% of Kansas students attend public education, and the impact of losing accreditation would favor private schools.

Unless standards for our Kansas schools are the same across the board, then legislation like this is poor legislation.

Also expecting Kansas schools to adhere to this level of statutory requirements when the State itself cannot even do that is hypocritical. The state should focus on fully funding Special Education instead of placing more red tape on public schools and providing ways for less accountability to private education.

Please OPPOSE HB 2612

Dawn Brumbley
Olathe, KS

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to read my written testimony on HB2612.

I am an educator with 44 years of experience. The last 19 years have been in Kansas.

As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I can assure that we are struggling to remain in conformance with all state laws and regulations. The problem is that the interpretation of such laws and regulations seems to be in a constant state of flux.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties.

School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed.

Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations.

If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Lloyd Buckley
PO Box 451
Bucklin, KS 67834

Testimony before the

House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

on

HB 2612

by

G.A. Buie, Executive Director - USA-Kansas and Kansas School Superintendents Association

Testimony provided on behalf of USA-Kansas and Kansas School Superintendents Association

Madam Chair and members of the committee:

Our organizations stand in opposition to this bill as it is presented today.

I believe the state legislature should allow the state board of education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are already expected to follow state law and State Board of Education regulations. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment.

The responsibility of developing the criteria for accrediting schools should lie with the Kansas State Department of Education, rather than the random thoughts and ideas from a legislative body not directly involved with the daily happenings of education. Accreditation is a complex process that requires expertise and in-depth knowledge of the education system. The State Department of Education is better equipped to evaluate schools based on a comprehensive set of criteria and make informed decisions regarding their accreditation status. We ensure a more streamlined and effective accreditation process by entrusting this responsibility to the appropriate educational authorities.

If the legislature or those who advise legislators want to help and support public education, I encourage them to sit down and learn, visit, and get involved with what happens in public education. Don't make judgments from a single story or two; stories are often told from a single perspective and not until both sides are heard does the reality of the truth prevail. Not that either side is lying, but the story is interpreted by what they hear or feel. The committee gathers information from sources who reviewed numbers or heard random stories, but 99 out of 100 times, I don't believe committee members have gone to the school to listen, learn, and understand the rationale behind the decisions. It's just easier to make a negative assumption and generate a bill to repair the fringe, but fixing the edges too often can affect the integrity of the middle.

I encourage the members of this committee to refrain from passing this bill out of committee, and, rather than fighting to repair the rough edges, decide to sit down and work together to continue growing public education.



USD 507 Satanta

100 Caddo PO Box 69 Satanta, Kansas 67870
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February 1, 2024

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to read my written testimony on HB2612. As a district leader, I take my duty to ensure that the school district follows all state laws very seriously, and I believe that HB2612 is unnecessary. The state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to handle accreditation. Under the newly approved accreditation system in Kansas, districts are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet compliance expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. The state BOE and KSDE already have a system in place to address districts that struggle to comply with requirements. Accreditation should not be used as a punishment. Let's base accreditation decisions on the work that schools are doing to advance student learning, instead of getting schools caught in the middle of differing interpretations of the law.

Another concern with the bill is that it requires a state audit be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Auditors are trained to deal with numbers only, not the big picture issues that impact accreditation. For this reason, accreditation decisions should not be placed in the hands of already overworked auditors.

I am also concerned that HB2612 only addresses public schools, not private or charter schools. This sets up an unfair system where private schools are allowed to violate laws and regulations, while public schools can be stripped of their accreditation based on individual interpretation of laws.

Kansas public schools are governed by the State School Board and locally elected boards of education. As a lifelong Kansan, I value the principle of local control. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform.

Sincerely,

Karen Burrows

USD 507 Superintendent

Every student, every day, whatever it takes.



February 1, 2024

Written Testimony: HB2612

Submitted by: Kansas Association of Special Education Administrators (KASEA)

Chairperson Williams and K-12 Education Budget Committee Members,

The Kansas Association of Special Education Administrators (KASEA) appreciates your time to consider our concerns on HB2612 as outlined in this written testimony. HB2612 would require school districts to be in compliance with all state laws, rules and regulations in order to be accredited. HB2612 will also require the Kansas State Board of Education to establish a process to challenge determinations of such compliance.

In review of this bill, it would appear that school districts are currently not following established laws, rules and regulations. In reality, every Kansas school district and school makes a good faith effort to be in compliance with all state and federal laws, regulations and rules. A system of identifying and correcting noncompliance is already in place within the KESA accreditation process as well as other KSDE programs. Therefore, KASEA opposes HB2612 as it is unnecessary and would create confusion rather than clarity.

There is a great deal of ambiguity in HB2612 about what it means to be in compliance with ALL state laws, regulations and rules. For example, in IDEA alone, there are over 700 compliance components in each IEP. While in most instances, compliance is easy to identify and correct, some laws and regulations are so complex that determining compliance and correcting is a very difficult and tedious process. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers on a report or a disagreement on how dollars should be used. Currently when noncompliance is identified by KSDE, schools and districts are provided the opportunity to review and make necessary changes while KSDE provides guidance and support prior to implementing a corrective action plan. Adding extensive duties to KSDE staff will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

Keep in mind, accreditation affects the community, as well each student and school district. Kansas schools are the cornerstone of many Kansas communities. Taking a hardline to accreditation based on minor infractions or procedural errors, which can be quickly remedied, could have a dire impact on property values in our Kansas communities.



In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards and KSDE to monitor school compliance with federal and state laws, regulations and rules.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Patty Carter, KASEA Legislative Committee Chair

Director of Special Education, Greenbush

P: 785-862-7840 ex 412 / M: 785-248-1184 / patty.carter@greenbush.org

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Dr. Lena Kisner, KASEA President

Executive Director, Reno County Education Cooperative Interlocal 610

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COFFEYVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BOARD OF EDUCATION OFFICE

DR. CRAIG A. CORRELL
615 Ellis
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www.usd445.org
Thursday, February 1, 24

Honorable Chairperson Williams and Members of the K-12 Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present my written testimony on HB2612. While I respect the concerns addressed in the bill, I believe its proposed approach raises concerns and may not be the most effective solution.

1. Importance of State Board of Education's Role:

- School accreditation is a complex process involving more than numerical data. It encompasses comprehensive evaluations of student outcomes, program effectiveness, and adherence to established laws and regulations.
- The State Board of Education, with its expertise and dedicated staff, is well-positioned to conduct these evaluations and guide districts towards improvement.

2. Accreditation as a Supportive Tool:

- When districts fall short of expectations, the current accreditation process provides valuable feedback and assistance from the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE). This collaborative approach promotes improvement and ensures student success, rather than using accreditation as a punitive measure.

3. Concerns Regarding State Audits:

- While ensuring compliance is crucial, relying solely on state audits could be problematic. Auditors primarily analyze financial data, potentially overlooking the nuances and context behind certain situations.
- Overburdening KSDE with additional audits could hinder their core function of supporting and guiding school districts.

USD #445 Mission Statement

Building on our culturally diverse community, USD 445 will prepare all students for life-long learning by providing resources for a comprehensive quality education in a safe environment that promotes high academic achievement and responsible citizenship in a global society.



COFFEYVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BOARD OF EDUCATION OFFICE

DR. CRAIG A. CORRELL

615 Ellis

Coffeyville, Kansas 67337

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Thursday, February 1, 24

4. Legislative Compliance & Resource Allocation:

- While emphasizing schools' compliance with laws, it's important to acknowledge the legislature's own obligation to fully fund education, including special education. Inconsistencies in funding create challenges for schools and can lead to discrepancies in interpreting legal requirements.

5. Empowering Local Boards:

- Locally elected school boards play a vital role in overseeing daily operations and addressing potential compliance issues within their districts. Replacing this system with external controls would hinder local accountability and responsiveness.

In conclusion, HB2612's intended goal of ensuring compliance is important. However, I urge the committee to consider alternative approaches that leverage the expertise of the State Board of Education, maintain a collaborative approach to improvement, and avoid placing undue burdens on both schools and KSDE.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dr. Craig A. Correll
Superintendent of Schools
Coffeyville Public Schools

USD #445 Mission Statement

Building on our culturally diverse community, USD 445 will prepare all students for life-long learning by providing resources for a comprehensive quality education in a safe environment that promotes high academic achievement and responsible citizenship in a global society.



LAKIN USD #215



Home of the Broncs

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my (ORAL/WRITTEN) testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Julie Crum
Superintendent

Colleen Cunningham, Kansas parent and former teacher

colleen@demod.com

HB2612, Requiring school districts to be in compliance with all state laws and rules and regulations to be accredited and requiring the state board of education to establish a process to challenge determinations of such compliance.

Opponent

February 1, 2024

Chair Williams and Committee Members,

My name is Colleen Cunningham. I am a former Special Education teacher with an MA in Education, have 3 young children who attend our amazing Blue Valley public schools, and I am writing today in opposition to HB2612.

On its face, HB2612 looks like a pro-student bill. Of course as parents, we all want our children to attend schools that are in compliance with various rules and regulations, and we look to a district's accreditation as a baseline for a school we want to send our children to. As someone who has kept an eye on various Education committees in Topeka, I know that there is more to this bill. I have watched over the past two weeks as discussions have centered on the impossibility of schools meeting evidence-based practices for curriculum standards when it comes to reaching many of our at-risk students. I have watched members of this legislature debate about banning certain types of curriculum that they personally do not support. I wonder about the logic of putting our public schools into a position that we know they cannot meet, or potentially removing local control of curriculum, and then punishing those public schools by revoking accreditation when they cannot meet that goal, or they provide that "woke" instruction. It is difficult to see this bill as much more than this committee working to remove accreditation from our public schools in order to shift enrollment (and funding) to private schools and schools funded by vouchers. I wonder where this change would leave rural families who do not have access to private schools, if their public schools were to lose accreditation.

I also oppose HB2612 because it places disparate demands on public schools, as compared to private schools and those receiving vouchers. I have often heard legislators opine about giving all Kansas children excellent educational opportunities. If this policy is intended to create excellent schools, wouldn't it stand to reason that the same policy would benefit (and therefore should apply to) private schools?

I oppose HB2612 because I think of students like my own children, who are able to attend excellent public schools and who will likely attend college in the not-too-distant future. They are excellent students who work hard in their classes, enjoy exploring a variety of elective courses and are active in extracurricular and volunteer activities in our community. They are doing everything within their power to make themselves "college-ready," even now in elementary and

middle school. Imagine they continue on this trajectory, but as they are getting ready to apply to colleges, this proposed legislation causes our school district to lose accreditation. Hard-working students across the state could very well be denied admission to colleges through no fault of their own.

Finally, I want to note the hypocrisy of this committee requiring school district compliance with statutes while our Kansas legislature has been out of compliance with statutory Special Education funding since 2012. Perhaps rather than holding last-minute hearings on ways to punish public schools for not doing the impossible with limited funding, this committee could spend its time together finding ways to fully fund special education services.

I urge members of this committee to vote NO on HB2612, and I thank you for your time and consideration.

Colleen Cunningham



Superintendent
620-885-4372

9-12 Principal
620-885-4611

PreK-8 Principal
620-885-4571

February 1, 2024

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. At Minneola, the staff spent six years focusing on the locally selected goals and state board outcomes. We were accredited last year due to the dedication of staff over many years addressing the needs of our students, staff, and school. This journey continues each year, not just the year of accreditation. Please don't undermine our efforts by making law interpretations more important. What matters is that accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever worked with only sees numbers. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors especially our local ones are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Knowing the history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, let the locally elected boards handle the issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lance Custer". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Lance Custer

Superintendent of Schools Minneola USD219



Judith Deedy on behalf of Game On for Kansas Schools

gameonforkansasschools@gmail.com

Opponent Testimony on

HB 2612 relating to school district accreditation; requiring school districts to be in compliance with all state laws and rules and regulations to be accredited

February 5, 2024

Madam Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 2612. This bill improperly usurps the role of the State Board of Education, is overbroad and is bad public policy that would have significant collateral damage.

As parents, we obviously want our districts to be in compliance with state laws and regulations, but even we understand the huge number of laws and regulations governing them. We understand that sometimes laws are flawed or open to interpretation. Under this bill, if a district acts in good faith, it could still lose accreditation if a different interpretation is deemed the “correct” one.

We support the State Board’s model of working with districts to bring them into compliance. Pulling a district’s accreditation for any violation, no matter how small and for any amount of time, without opportunity to cure the violation is a nuclear option. Removing accreditation would hurt students applying to colleges who would have to say their diploma is from an unaccredited school. Removing accreditation would destabilize communities and harm property values for homeowners. This bill’s approach reminds us of the approach during No Child Left Behind that was later rejected because of the harm it inflicted on communities.

We also note this law does not apply to accredited private schools nor does it remove eligibility for the tax credit scholarship program for schools not accredited by the state. If the legislature deems this bill good policy, it should apply to private schools, too.

Thank you for your consideration of these and other issues relating to HB 2612.

Donnavan Dillon
Private Citizen
Oral Opponent Testimony of HB 2616

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Donnavan Dillon. I was born and raised in Lawrence, Kansas. I am a sophomore at the University of Kansas pursuing a double major in political science and sociology. I graduated from Lawrence High in 2021. I would not be where I am today without the support of our public school system in Kansas which is why I am here to urge you to vote in opposition of Senate Bill 2616.

The first issue I'd like to address is something I think we can all agree on. Outside of the legislature in the public sphere there is a lack of public education during and after the session. Every session a myriad of bills are debated and passed that make what could be significant changes to law and policy that impact people's everyday lives. This on top of legal battles that often ensue leave the public confused on what has stayed, changed, or has been held up in court. As someone who works in and follows the legislature and policy as a student as well as part of my job this can even be confusing for me. We have to think how confusing this can be for the general public who has little to no background or education on the bills and issues that exit this building at the end of every session. In the context of this bill the everchanging and unclear landscape can create instances under this legislation where a school can lose accreditation due to a lack of clarity on where policy stands, especially when policy enters into the courts.

A loss of accreditation is a serious matter that should not be taken lightly. It can have direct effects on the outcomes of students pursuing a higher education as well as a quality education. This decision goes even further than district administration and can impact parents, students, and teachers alike especially when made on such swift and punitive timelines as proposed in the bill. We have to think what the loss of accreditation during someone's high school years could do to their future outcomes? When accreditation can take such a long time to receive, why is it something we are interested in taking away at the first instance of a mistake.

This bill is overly punitive and is a direct attack on public schools. This bill does not apply to private schools however subjects public schools to extremely punitive measures when there is a perfectly good system in place. In our current system there are already guidelines and checks in place through the Kansas Department of Education more specifically the Accreditation Advisory and Review Councils. Switching to a system that is more punitive rather than focuses on schools keeping their accreditation and better understanding state law and its impact on individual districts.

With that I leave you with one question: If the purpose of this bill is to solve the issue of schools not adhering to state guidelines why aren't private schools included as well.

Because of the aforementioned reasons and many more I urge you to vote in opposition of HB 2616,

Donnavan Dillon

Testimony on HB 2612
February 1, 2024
Submitted by: Linn Exline, Superintendent

Chairperson Williams and members of the K-12 Committee,

I am writing to add my voice to the discourse surrounding HB 2612 and wish to express my gratitude for your consideration of my written testimony.

Upon examining the bill, it appears to presuppose that school districts are not abiding by existing laws. Accreditation, impacting every student in a district, should not be weaponized as a punitive measure due to differing law interpretations. Instead, accreditation should remain within the purview of the Kansas State Board of Education, those with expertise and understanding of K-12 education. The state legislature should entrust the State Board of Education with its appointed responsibilities.

I agree that it should be the expectation that school districts adhere to state laws and the regulations of the State Board of Education. There are many examples where laws are amended for clarity, where laws are challenged for interpretation, and where questions about intent of laws arise. School accreditation should not be withdrawn due to disagreements over financial allocation, reporting methods or interpretation. In cases where schools fall short of the standards, districts should be given the opportunity for review under the advisory guidance of the KSDE.

A requirement for KSDE to conduct a state audit prior to reinstating the district's accredited status places a focus on numerical data. The reasons behind numerical fluctuations, revealed as part of a comprehensive accreditation process, will likely be lost. Auditors should not be the gatekeepers for reclaiming accreditation.

This law seems paradoxical, given the historical context of the Kansas budget and the legislature's protracted delay in fully funding special education. Perhaps a discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded is at issue. Nevertheless, it took multiple lawsuits before general education was fully funded and special education remains underfunded.

Let's not embroil schools in the intricacies of law interpretation, thus distracting them from their primary objective—educating the students.

In conclusion, local school boards, overseen by the State School Board, govern our schools. Let us rely on their judgment in monitoring educators and daily operations. Should there be intentional violation of laws, rest assured, our boards will appropriately address the issue.



Oral opponent testimony on

HB 2612

School district accreditation

By

Leah Fliter, Assistant Executive Director of Advocacy

Kansas Association of School Boards

Lfliter@kasb.org

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

KASB's member-affirmed legislative policies state, "We support general supervision of public schools under the State Board of Education, including setting standards for accreditation, learning standards, graduation, and licensure. We support management of public schools under locally elected boards of education, including setting curriculum, staffing, financial management, and policies, so that such schools can progress and meet State Board standards."

HB 2612 appears to conflict with the state constitution's granting of the "general supervision" of public schools—which includes decisions on accreditation—to the State Board of Education. As a result, we're compelled to oppose the bill.

We have additional concerns that also prompt our opposition to HB 2612.

In addition to our constitutional concerns, we confess to being confused by the phrase "not in compliance" on line 34 of the bill. This is so vague as to be unworkable. We respectfully ask the committee, under this bill, who decides what "in compliance" means, and when? Is it when the State Board of Education makes that determination? A court? A single legislator or parent? We respectfully suggest this phrase is not a workable standard, and highlights the constitutional problems noted above.

We're similarly confused by new section 3(C). It appears to allow a single person to put the accreditation of an entire school district at risk. This is unworkable and not an appropriate part of a school district's accreditation process.

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.

Kansas Association of School Boards

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

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

It is a known fact that the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education. The question could also be asked, knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Please don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Our job is hard enough, please don't make it harder by micromanaging school districts. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Sincerely,
Dan Frisby, Supt.

Representative Kristey Williams (Kristey.williams@house.ks.gov)

Committee Assistant: Susan.Bartley@house.ks.gov

K.12.Budget@house.ks.gov

Re: Opponent: House Bill 2612. Hearing Feb. 1, 2024

Dear Representative Williams,

I am writing to ask that you not support House Bill 2612, which will pull the accreditation for public schools in the event that the legislature bans the teaching of any history concerning race or LGBTQ people, information commonly taught in Advanced Placement and High School/College Credit classes. This bill would handicap the children of your constituents who are preparing to enter college and who wish to take advantage of the savings offered by these classes. This bill would not apply the same penalty to private schools, but most of your voters use the public school system, not private schools.

These classes are extremely popular. This bill would gut important curricula, denying students this more affordable higher education credit, and any support of 2612 would not be popular with the majority of the voters in your district, forcing these parents to go further into debt to pay college tuition. Your support of this bill would be a tactical mistake and undermine your voters' confidence in your leadership.

Thank you for taking time to read this. I know you have many items to work on now, and I appreciate your taking into account our concerns on this issue.

Sincerely,

Joan T Gilson, PhD

13850 W. 91st Ter. Apt 512D

Lenexa, KS 66215

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 statue 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 statue is an issue anywhere in Kansas schools and that this change to the wording of existing statute is necessary, than 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

February 1, 2024

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



Lindsey Graf
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lgraf@usd244ks.org

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School Psychologist
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Rachel Barraza
School Psychologist
barraza@usd243ks.org

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Data Coordinator
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February 1st, 2024

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws and even more so that school districts are intentionally breaking laws.

The job of the State Board of Education is to establish regulations and to ensure that schools are adhering to the laws and regulations. The state legislature is implying that the state board is not doing their job, but then throughout the bill puts additional responsibilities on them to allow schools to regain accreditation. If you are under the impression, they are unable to do their job, then what sense does it make to add to their responsibilities. Instead, the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to actually perform their established duties. The requirement of maintaining accreditation is more than numbers or report compliance. As mentioned above school districts are required to follow the laws of the state and the regulations of the State Board. If a school fails to show student progress, district progress, or meet the expectations, then the district is provided an opportunity to review the status and obtain feedback and guidance from the State Department on how to improve.

Accreditation affects every student in a school district and to have accreditation held as a punitive action based on the interpretation of the law, is unfair and only hurts the students. The comprehensive model that the State Board of Education uses to monitor schools is broad enough as to ensure schools are constantly looking for ways to improve for the betterment of ALL students. If interpreting the law was so simple, then I would venture to say there would not be historical and current confusion on how to fund not only public education but special education. The State Board of Education is quite capable of doing their job and accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who has the staff, skills, understanding, and resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. School districts are audited multiple times per year as is, some audits focus on money, but others on compliance and progress. There is much more to evaluate in a district than just raw data. You must look at the entire picture, the state department has the ability to do that very thing.

Again, I would like to refer to the importance of "interpreting the law". As I said before if laws were so easily interpreted, then I am very confused as to why there has been a need for multiple lawsuits before the state legislature would fund education to the fulfillment of the law. Is it because they simply do not want to or because there are various ways to interpret the law. As a 22-year educator, I have been astonished of how hard schools must fight just to get the funding that is stated in law that they are to receive. As a Special Education educator, that astonishment is amplified as the law clearly states one thing and yet the state has not come close to funding that for many years. I would be in jail if I opted to not follow the laws that I did not agree with. So, with that, I think it best to not continue to get schools caught in the crossfires of discrepancies of interpreting the law when they should be focused on educating students and making progress for all students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Schools should be allowed the local control that the systems are in place to support. Allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue. Allow the State Board of Education to do their job. Allow the Local School Boards to do their job. Allow us to educate kids.

Sincerely,

Lindsey Graf
Director of Special Education
lgraf@usd244ks.org
620-364-5151 ext. 3090

February 5th, 2024

Testimony to the House K-12 Education Budget Committee

NAME: Ian Graves

EMAIL ADDRESS: ian.graves@protonmail.com

BILL NUMBER: HB 2612

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: Opponent

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: Written Only

Chair Williams and the Committee,

I'm writing to ask the committee to oppose HB 2612.

Once again, we find ourselves engineering creative ways to undermine public schools in Kansas. While I commend the authors of this bill for their efforts at creative destruction, this bill is bad for students, families, communities, and Kansas.

Public school systems are the backbone of so many communities. Their accreditation, by extension, is essential to their function for the working families served by these institutions. Communities, teachers, and staff put their blood, sweat, and tears into their schools. This bill seeks to undermine that work by eliminating school accreditation for any minor infraction of Kansas State Law.

The rationale for such a bill is anti-public school. Threatening the accreditation of a public school system, which jeopardizes students' futures, is intentional. This bill will enable the passage of subsequent "culture war issue" bills (so-called problems like "CRT," "DEI," and other silly non-issues) to penalize schools for teaching topics the legislature decides are verboten. This bill would enable the legislature, on a whim, to subvert the state Board of Education and strip a school district of its accreditation for wholly political reasons. This is, quite literally, playing politics with the lives of families and children.

I note the exclusion of non-public schools from this level of scrutiny. Communities invest their valued treasure and time into their schools to see them succeed. This bill takes a hostile stance towards these public, communal efforts. In the meantime, it turns a blind eye to unregulated schools operating for profit. A high school with many parent volunteers, community help, and local control is subjected to destructive "oversight" because it touches the culture war issue du jour. At the same time, a for-profit voucher-style "micro-school" sees no similar oversight or control. This is a craven assault on public institutions.

Please oppose HB 2612. It violates existing due process, violates local control, and is destructive to our public institutions.

Ian Graves
Prairie Village, KS

Emporia, KS 66801
www.usd253.org

Mary Herbert
Education Center
1700 W 7th Avenue
PO Box 1008
Telephone 620-341-2200
Fax 620-341-2325

Flint Hills Special
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Emporia High School
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Emporia Middle School
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Telephone 620-341-2335

Flint Hills Learning Center
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Jones Early Childhood
Development Center
327 S Walnut Street
Telephone 620-412-8150

Logan Avenue Elementary
521 S East Street
Telephone 620-341-2264

Riverside Elementary
327 S West Street
Telephone 620-341-2276

Timmerman Elementary
2901 Timmerman Drive
Telephone 620-341-2270

Village Elementary
2302 W 15th Avenue
Telephone 620-341-2282

Walnut Elementary
801 Grove Avenue
Telephone 620-341-2288

William Allen White Elementary
902 Exchange Street
Telephone 620-341-2294

February 1, 2024

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to read my written testimony on HB2612. As I read this bill, it appears that you perceive that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. Our district is consistently focused on school improvement for our students and to ensure that we are accredited. We know that schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. There are clearly outlined steps for schools in danger of not being accredited. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the education department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Auditors focus on numbers. They are not tasked to determine as to *why* a district's data might have changed. Adding one more responsibility to KSDE auditors will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

The focus should be on being in compliance with the law by fully funding special education and why it has taken the legislature so long to address this important issue. Knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Let schools do their jobs of educating students.

Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If there is a concern, I am confident that our boards will address it.

Sincerely,
Allison Anderson Harder, Ed.D., Superintendent

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL
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(785) 296-7673
kirk.haskins@house.ks.gov



1035 SW ASHWORTH ROAD
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haskinsforkansas@gmail.com

DR. KIRK HASKINS
53RD DISTRICT

House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

RE: Opposition - HOUSE BILL No. 2612

I am submitting this written testimony, on behalf of my constituents, to express my deep concerns regarding House Bill 2612. While the intention behind this amendment is to ensure that school districts adhere to state laws and regulations, I firmly stand in opposition for it poses significant harm and challenges to the Kansas Public Education System. This stance is based on 25 years of working and teaching at all levels of the Kansas education system – both public and private.

HB 2612 places an undue burden on school districts, potentially jeopardizing their accreditation status based on compliance with a multitude of laws and regulations. The complexity and ever-changing nature of these legal frameworks will lead to inadvertent violations, unfairly penalizing school districts for minor infractions. This rigid approach fails to consider the nuanced challenges faced by educational institutions and will hinder their ability to provide quality education to our children.

Furthermore, the requirement for school districts to notify parents in writing about their loss of accreditation adds an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy. While transparency is crucial, this provision creates unwarranted panic among parents, leading to a decline in enrollment and disrupting the learning environment for students. We should aim for a balanced approach that ensures accountability without causing unnecessary alarm.

Excluding private schools and homeschools from the scope of House Bill 2612 inadvertently creates a two-tiered system that will inflict harm on our educational landscape. This omission inadvertently contributes to a disparity in standards and accountability, potentially impacting the choices available to parents and students. A comprehensive approach that considers all types of educational institutions is essential to ensure a fair and equitable evaluation of our state's entire education system.

Lastly, HB 2612 allows individuals to challenge determinations of school district compliance or noncompliance with state laws raising questions about the potential for abuse. This process could be exploited for personal or political motives, leading to unwarranted disruptions in our education system. We must carefully consider the potential consequences and safeguards to prevent misuse of this provision.

In conclusion, while I share the goal of ensuring that our Kansas schools comply with state laws and regulations, I believe HB 2612 in its current form is not the solution. We must strive for a more balanced and nuanced approach that considers the diverse challenges faced by our school districts, fosters collaboration, and promotes a fair and effective accreditation system for the benefit of our students and the future of Kansas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirk R. Haskins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line at the end.

Dr. Kirk R. Haskins
Representative
House District 53 - Topeka

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612.

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed bill that seeks to strip schools of their accreditation if they are found to be in violation of the law. While the intention behind this bill may be to ensure accountability, it is crucial to consider the potential unintended consequences and the impact it may have on the educational system in Kansas.

Accreditation is a vital component of our education system, focusing on student and staff growth, grounded in school improvement plans. The accreditation process serves as a mechanism for continuous improvement, fostering a commitment to excellence within our schools and communities. It is important to emphasize that accreditation has no direct bearing on the legal operations of a school; rather, it is centered on fostering a culture of ongoing improvement.

In Kansas, the oversight of professional school operations is entrusted to the Kansas Department of Education and locally controlled boards. These entities are well-equipped to ensure that schools adhere to legal requirements and operate in the best interest of students. Placing the power to strip accreditation solely in the hands of legislative bodies may undermine the existing system of checks and balances.

It is crucial to acknowledge that no school intentionally violates the law, and the current oversight mechanisms are effective in addressing any issues that may arise. This proposed bill seems to introduce a new, potentially punitive measure that could inadvertently harm the educational experience of Kansas students. Trust in the professional operation of schools and confidence in the accreditation process should remain within the purview of the Kansas Department of Education and locally controlled boards.

Furthermore, it is essential to consider the broader context of this proposed legislation. The timing and nature of the bill raise questions about whether it may be driven by political motivations, rather than a genuine concern for the welfare of Kansas students. Using accreditation as a weapon to settle disputes over funding or other political disagreements is not in the best interest of our education system.

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider the implications of this proposed bill and to place trust in the existing oversight mechanisms provided by the Kansas Department of Education and locally controlled boards. Our focus should be on collaboration and support for our public schools, ensuring the continued growth and success of our students. Thank you for your ongoing support of Kansas public schools.

Sincerely,

Tim Hayden
Professional Educator

**LEROY-GRIDLEY
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 245**

Nikole Houston, Board Clerk / Business Manager
Telephone: 620-964-2212 Fax: 620-964-2413
E-mail: nhouston@usd245ks.org
1013 N. Main LeRoy, Kansas 66857

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Sincerely,

Nikole Houston

Board of Education			
Craig Nickel - President	Johannah Snovelle – Vice President	Heather Hill	Kenton Ludolph
Sean Lehmann	Zach Roush		Sarah Stewart
Matt Thomsen, Superintendent	Nikki Houston, Clerk/Business Manager		

U.S.D. 312 HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"Where excellence is the expectation."

414 W Main St.
PO Box 130
Haven, KS 67543

Craig Idacavage, Superintendent
620-465-3445
havenschools.com



Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. I want to express my concerns regarding HB2612, a bill that mandates school districts to be in strict compliance with all state laws, rules, and regulations to maintain accreditation.

I advocate for the state legislature to empower the State Board of Education to fulfill its established responsibilities. School accreditation transcends mere numerical assessments or disputes over budget allocations or procedural protocols. It mandates adherence to policy and regulations set by the State Board of Education. When schools fail to demonstrate growth or meet expectations, districts have the opportunity to review the process, supported by guidance from the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE). Accreditation profoundly impacts every student within a district and should not be wielded as a punitive tool based on subjective interpretations of laws. Accreditation oversight should remain within the purview of the department, which possesses the requisite staff, expertise, understanding, and track record of working effectively with schools and districts, along with resources necessary to support them comprehensively.

Another issue raised by this bill is the requirement for a state audit conducted by KSDE to restore a district to accredited status. My experience with auditors has consistently revealed a narrow focus solely on numbers, with little consideration for the underlying reasons behind fluctuations in those numbers. Given the already burdensome caseload faced by auditors, imposing additional responsibilities would likely compromise the quality and thoroughness of their work.

I believe it is worth questioning why the legislature has consistently failed to fully fund special education for so many years. Given the historical context of the Kansas budget, why did it necessitate multiple lawsuits before the legislature finally allocated full funding for general education? Perhaps this delay stemmed from differing interpretations of what constitutes "full funding." It is imperative not to entangle schools in legal interpretations of laws, diverting them from their primary mission of educating students.

If it is the intention of the legislature that all schools be subject to increased accreditation standards, it would be hypocritical to not apply these same regulations to ANY educational organization receiving state funds, including private and parochial schools.

In conclusion, our schools are overseen by both the State School Board and locally elected boards of education that represent community values and priorities. It is vital to entrust our local boards with the responsibility of monitoring educators and their daily activities. If any educator is found to be intentionally violating the law, we have full confidence that our local board is capable of addressing and resolving the issue appropriately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Idacavage". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Craig Idacavage, Superintendent

Taryn Jones, Vice Chair/Lobbyist – Equality Kansas

3730 Metropolitan Ave.

Kansas City, Kansas 66106

vicechair@eqks.org 913-229-6529

HB 2612 - Requiring school districts to be in compliance with all state laws and rules and regulations to be accredited and requiring the state board of education to establish a process to challenge determinations of such compliance.

We oppose the passage of HB 2612

5 February 2024

Equality Kansas maintains that HB 2612 sets the stage to remove accreditation to any public school, not including private schools, once the Legislature introduces a bill to ban the teaching of true history such as teaching information with regard to Critical Race Theory (CRT) or LGBTQ+ laws, as an example.

What is particularly harmful about this bill is the negative and harmful effect it will have on students that have chosen a path towards university or any other levels of higher education. If the high school the affected student attends is not accredited when the affected student applies for admission into university, the affected student could be denied admission through no fault of their own.

This bill is also not fair to the Kansas Public Schools that are expected to be held at a higher level of compliance with state statutes when the Kansas Legislature itself hasn't met statutory requirements to fully fund special education.

Equality Kansas urges the committee to vote NO on HB 2612

Thank You,

Taryn Jones

Vice-Chair, Equality Kansas

Lobbyist-Equality Kansas





Testimony before the

House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

on

SB 2612

by

Testimony provided on behalf of Jim Karleskint, USA-KS

United School Administrators of Kansas are opposed to HB 2612.

The Kansas State Board of Education has the responsibility of accrediting schools not the legislature.

There is no school or school district that is perfect. This bill has the potential of non-accrediting every school district in the state of Kansas. A school district may not be aware of a violation and could lose accreditation over an oversight.

By allowing an individual to challenge whether or not a school district is in compliance of a state law or statute, has the potential to allow a displeased patron to create an audit of the district on questionable grounds.

Non-public schools are not given the same expectations.

These are just some of the reasons United School Administrators of Kansas oppose HB 2612.

Respectfully,

Jim Karleskint, USA-KS



From: Cille King, League of Women Voters of Kansas, Advocacy Chair

Contact: advocacy@lwk.org

Bill Number: HB 2612 - Requiring school districts to be in compliance with all state laws and rules and regulations to be accredited and requiring the state board of education to establish a process to challenge determinations of such compliance.

Disposition: Opponent; Written only Testimony

Date of Testimony: Monday, February 5, 2024

To: Chair Representative Williams and members of the House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

The League of Women Voters of Kansas opposes HB 2612 which would unfairly threaten public schools (not private schools) with a different standard of accreditation.

This legislation could harm our bright students who plan to attend higher education. If their high school isn't accredited when they apply to college, they could be denied admission by no fault of their own.

The Kansas Legislature should instead meet the statutory requirements and fully fund special education to provide Kansas schools with the resources they need to provide all students with a good education.

We ask that you vote NO on HB 2612.

League of Women Voters of Kansas

PO BOX 2366, Topeka, KS 66601 • 785-234-5152 • www.lwk.org • president@lwk.org

Jeanne Koontz
Koontz.jeanne@gmail.com

Hutchinson, KS

HB 2612 – School District Compliance for Accreditation

Opponent

Hearing Date 2/5/2024

Dear members of the House Committee on K-12 Education Budget,

I'm writing to you today to request that you vote NO on House Bill 2612. This Bill will set the stage to remove accreditation to any public school which can be harmful to students who plan to attend college or higher education. If their school is not accredited, they could be denied admission to the college of their choice through no fault of their own. The Bill is also unfair to our public schools that they are expected to be held to a certain level of compliance with state statute when the KS Legislature itself hasn't met statutory requirements to fully fund special education.

Please vote NO on HB 2612.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Koontz



USD 401 Chase-Raymond

313 E Ave C
Chase, Kansas 67524

Dr. Kylee McDonald, Superintendent
620-938-2913

February 1, 2024

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools. Our district has recently worked through the important and challenging steps of school improvement and accreditation review. This process ensures that we as a district are responsive to our local community, the needs of our business and industry, and our focus is intensive in the focus of improving outcomes for students.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Chase Raymond is a small rural district and we had to use general education funding dollars that takes away from other school improvement focuses to cover 40% of our Special Education Cooperative bill during the 2022-2023 school year. Knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue as USD 401 has proven in the past!

Sincerely,

Dr. Kylee McDonald
USD 401 Superintendent

"Learning Through Caring and Sharing"

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to read my testimony on HB2612. After reading this bill, it appears that there is an assumption among the committee that school districts are knowingly and persistently violating state law and regulation.

The purpose of the accreditation process is to ensure that schools are following consistent processes and best practices is educating the children in their communities. Schools are already required to follow state laws and regulations, and there are mechanisms in place for ensuring that schools and districts are legally compliant. By misusing the accreditation process as an implement of punishment, this bill would take the focus off the education of students and divert that attention to mere compliance with no discernible benefit for anyone involved. This bill puts the responsibility of remediating these issues on state auditors, who are already overburdened with massive caseloads and ever changing and increasing top-down edicts.

Moreover, the bill does not specify who would determine if a school or district is “in compliance with all applicable state laws and rules and regulations”, leaving this interpretation open to partisan dispute and subjective judgment. A school could, therefore, find their accreditation in danger, not because they have failed their students, but because they have run afoul of the wrong political influence.

In my 20 years as a public school educator, I have never seen a school or district knowingly and with intent violate the law. In those cases where violations were found, policies and practices were changed quickly, often before any audit or investigation required remediation. Kansas schools are intent on properly serving their students and communities, and they do their jobs well without the vague threat of punishment from a poorly worded and conceived piece of legislation.

Rather than create additional mechanisms for punishing Kansas schools, the Committee’s time would be better spent exploring why the Kansas Legislature has been able to break its own law for so many years by not fully funding special education. The Committee would find adequate work to do by reflecting why it took multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education budgets, but instead seems intent on provoking another legal battle by falling short of its own standard.

Kansas schools are adequately governed by local residents, local boards of education, and an elected State Board of Education. Please allow HB 2612 to fade away and focus on the greatst

impact this Committee can have: ensuring that the Legislature complies with existing law and legal opinion and ensuring that Kansas schools are appropriately funded.

Respectfully,
Zachary Lawrence
Wichita, KS



Chairperson Williams and K-12 Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts on HB2612. Hopefully, my perspective on this bill and the potential implications of the bill is valuable.

I advocate to continue granting the State Board of Education the authority to carry out their designated responsibilities. School accreditation extends beyond mere numerical figures or disputes over budget allocation or reporting methods. Schools are obligated to adhere to state laws and regulations set by the State Board of Education. In instances where schools fail to demonstrate progress or meet expectations, districts are given the chance to review the process, with guidance and support from the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). The accreditation process significantly impacts every student in a school district and should not be employed as a punitive measure based solely on a particular interpretation of a law. It is essential to entrust accreditation to the department equipped with the necessary staff, skills, comprehension, and experience in collaborating with schools and districts, along with the resources to support all educational institutions.

An additional issue with the proposed legislation is that KSDE is required to conduct a state audit to restore the district to accredited status. In my experience, every auditor I've encountered focuses solely on numbers without considering the reasons behind any changes in those numbers. Given the auditors' existing heavy caseload, imposing additional responsibilities will likely compromise the thoroughness and accuracy of their work.

A pertinent question arises regarding why the legislature has seemingly violated the law for many years by not fully funding special education. Understanding the historical context of the Kansas budget, it took multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education, possibly due to discrepancies in interpreting what constitutes full funding. It is imperative not to entangle schools in the complexities of legal interpretation, diverting them from their primary mission of educating students.

In conclusion, schools operate under the jurisdiction of the State School Board and locally elected boards of education. It is essential to empower our local boards to oversee educators and their daily activities. If any intentional violations of the law occur, we trust that our local boards are well-equipped to address and manage such issues.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Lehr', is placed on a light gray rectangular background.

Greg Lehr
USD 262 Superintendent



Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Loretta Logan (Educator and Republican)



900 S.W. Jackson Street, Suite 600
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(785) 296-3203
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Danny Zeck
District 1

Melanie Haas
District 2

Michelle Dombrosky
District 3

Ann E. Mah
District 4

Cathy Hopkins
District 5

Dr. Deena Horst
District 6

Dennis Hershberger
District 7

Betty J. Arnold
District 8

Jim Porter
District 9

Jim McNiece
District 10

OPPONENT IN-PERSON TESTIMONY ON HB 2612
COMMITTEE ON K-12 EDUCATION BUDGET
Hearing on Monday, February 5, 2024
Submitted by Ann Mah and Dr. Deena Horst
Kansas State Board of Education Liaisons

Chairperson Kristey Williams and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing us to testify today in opposition to HB 2612. The Kansas State Board of Education (State Board) believes HB 2612 is unnecessary and in derogation of the self-executing authority granted to us by the Kansas Constitution.

The State Board already requires school districts to remain "in compliance with, or working with the State Board to achieve compliance with, all applicable federal and state statutes and regulations." HB 2612 takes away the ability of the State Board to provide technical support and guidance to schools by mandating immediate revocation of a district's accreditation upon a finding that it is not completely in compliance with state law.

Additionally, HB 2612 attempts to create a private right of action for anyone that does not agree with the State Board's determination of whether a school district is in compliance with applicable laws. The Kansas State Department of Education and the State Board work diligently to address concerns raised by parents, staff members, administrators, and the community. The manner in which those concerns are handled at the state level should not be delegated to non-elected individuals. If the State Board wishes to amend its accreditation regulations to allow for such strong, individual input, it will do so without the demand imposed this bill.

For those reasons, the State Board strongly opposes this legislation.

2/1/2024

February 1, 2024

Testimony to the House K-12 Education Budget Committee

NAME: **Leslie D. Mark**

TITLE: **Kansas Citizen / Voter**

EMAIL ADDRESS: **ldmark61@gmail.com**

BILL NUMBER: **HB2612, *Requiring School Districts to be in Compliance with All State Laws and Rules and Regulations to be Accredited and Requiring the State Board of Education to Establish a Process to Challenge Determinations of Such Compliance.***

PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL: **Opponent**

ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY: **Written Only**

Dear Chair Williams & Members of the Committee,

I write to voice opposition to HB 2612, a bill threatening only public schools' accreditation in Kansas — holding them to a different standard and dividing criteria used for public and private education. This bill is striking in its bold attempt to remove accreditation from any public school while disenfranchising the elected KS Board of Education.

Once the KS Legislature were to introduce any legislation banning the teaching of "true history," one can recognize the harm this kind of legislation would do to bright young Kansans poised on a college track. If their high school isn't accredited when they apply to college, they could be denied admission through no fault of theirs.

KS Leg and this Committee are well aware that Article 6 of the Kansas Constitution establishes a State Board of Education, all of which members are elected from districts about twelve times the size of each of yours. Every public school in Kansas is required to participate in the state's accreditation process which, again, is by law the purview of the Kansas State Board of Education. It is not the purview of the Kansas Policy Institute and extremist partisans who do not possess the best interests of ALL Kansas students.

Stresses of the 21st century are taking a toll on Kansas — from a fractured polity to traditional businesses, to our communities, families, and schools in every county. All of us see the expanding challenges ahead. The future of Kansas, however, will beam brightly if we choose to remain committed to quality public education. We should be focused on creating learning opportunities accessible to all Kansas students so that they, in turn, can help right the ship of future KS Leg!

Vote NO on HB2612.

Leslie D. Mark

Mission Hills, HD 25 / Sen 7

Dr. Kevin McCannon

Contact information: kevin.mccannon@gmail.com

Bill number and Bill title/topic: HB2612, concerning education relating to school district accreditation

Position on bill: Opponent

February 5, 2024

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

I submit this testimony in opposition to HB 2612 regarding school district accreditation. This bill unfairly holds public and private schools to different accreditation standards. As an instructor at the state's flagship university, I hold the same expectations of preparedness for all of my students, irrespective of their educational background be it from private or public schools. I work under the reasonable assumption that the students from the state of Kansas who enroll in my courses were also held to the same standards by the state during their K-12 school years. While accreditation standards are directed to schools and districts, ultimately what accreditation does is to ensure that student outcomes are commensurate with standard expectations for K-12 students. Per K.S.A. 72-3218(c):

c) Subjects and areas of instruction shall be designed by the state board of education to achieve the goal established by the legislature of providing each and every child with at least the following capacities:

(1) Sufficient oral and written communication skills to enable students to function in a complex and rapidly changing civilization;

(2) sufficient knowledge of economic, social, and political systems to enable the student to make informed choices;

(3) sufficient understanding of governmental processes to enable the student to understand the issues that affect his or her community, state, and nation;

(4) sufficient self-knowledge and knowledge of his or her mental and physical wellness;

(5) sufficient grounding in the arts to enable each student to appreciate his or her cultural and historical heritage;

(6) sufficient training or preparation for advanced training in either academic or vocational fields so as to enable each child to choose and pursue life work intelligently; and

(7) sufficient levels of academic or vocational skills to enable public school students to compete favorably with their counterparts in surrounding states, in academics or in the job market.

I want to emphasize the above language "each and every child." The language of the law implies that the standards 1-7 are applicable to all accredited Kansas school students irrespective of school funding source. All students are thus to be treated equally. By creating a separate

accreditation standard for public schools and one for private schools, the state will be out of compliance with its own standard set forth in K.S.A. 72-3218(c). Separate systems of accreditation open the door for different definitions of the “capacities” as outlined in K.S.A. 72-3218(c), which would not follow from the language cited above. “Each and every child” means all children, not children in public versus private schools. Otherwise, the state should change that language to indicate that students in public schools are to be treated differently than those in private schools. But I am not certain that would be legal, given the *Brown v. Board* decision, or if nothing more, the optics would be bad for the state.

In any event, I should be able to expect that all Kansas students enrolled in my classes have learned the same thing, and that what they have learned reflects the latest, most up-to-date evidence-based (e.g., peer-reviewed scholarly literature, accepted professional standards) curriculum grounded in contemporary pedagogical methods and the educational expertise of K-12 teachers. Kansas students entering the University setting with differential knowledge and skills due to the standards by which their schools were held, not due to their individual proclivities, interests, or efforts, could create disparities in educational attainment in higher education, thus placing increased pressure on college faculty and administration to ensure students at Kansas universities meet standards of excellence and reflect the best of the state of Kansas, which I would have to imagine that you, the honorable legislators of this state, would want of your own children and grandchildren.

Now, I say all the above in reference to law as someone whose expertise is not in law, so perhaps my legal interpretations are inaccurate. I would leave that to law experts to decide. But what I do know is fairness, something I religiously practice in my classes. If I as an individual teacher can hold my handful of students each year to the same standards, then why, I might ask, could the state of Kansas not do the same to all students in all schools across the state? Because if the state can justify holding different groups of students to different standards, then should I also be able to do so? I don’t think that would be the precedent you would want to establish here with this bill. But if this bill passes, and schools are held to different standards, and those standards are such that a school by its functioning according to the above evidence-based standards loses accreditation, the last thing I would want is for a very bright student in the state of Kansas, who might be your own grandchild, or niece and nephew, to lose out on the educational, career, wellbeing, and life opportunities college affords simply because their high school lost its accreditation when they never had to. I don’t think you would want to take that chance.

Thank you,

Kevin McCannon, PhD

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I spent over 25 years in public education (North Carolina & Missouri) and continue to work with school district communicators across the United States.

I believe strongly that the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform its established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. Often, they pay little attention to why numbers might have changed. They are already overwhelmed with their caseload, so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

As an example, I'm married to someone who audits government credit card use for the federal government. He's often overwhelmed with ensuring federal policies and regulations are followed while simultaneously navigating the nuances of each department and agency, as well as giving special attention to the role each employee plays in the overall mission. While some things are black and white, he recognizes some situations and conditions require more information, more understanding, more training, and more latitude rather than a quick removal of their access to funds. HB2612 would eliminate understanding the nuances of each staff member and child in school districts.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education. Knowing the history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully

funded. I urge you to not get school districts caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their mission of educating students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and **locally** elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm confident our boards can handle the issue.

Thank you for your time.

--

Melissa McConnell

Manager, Professional Development & Member Engagement
National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA)

(h) 12500 W 130th Terrace
Overland Park, KS 66213
913.904.4736

Subject: Testimony Against HB2612 - Protection of State Board of Education's Role in School Accreditation

Chairperson Williams and the K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As an education consultant deeply engaged in assisting schools throughout Kansas in their accreditation process, I write to express my strong opposition to HB2612. This proposed legislation, in seeking to alter the oversight of school accreditation, threatens to undermine the essential role of the State Board of Education and jeopardize the integrity of our educational system.

School accreditation is not merely a bureaucratic exercise or a matter of administrative procedure. It is a fundamental aspect of ensuring that our schools meet the highest standards of quality and accountability, thereby safeguarding the educational well-being of our students. Accreditation processes are designed to uphold state laws and regulations, ensuring that schools adhere to prescribed standards and provide the best possible learning environment for every child.

The State Board of Education is entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing accreditation, backed by its expertise, experience, and resources. The board is uniquely positioned to understand the diverse needs of schools and districts across Kansas and to provide tailored guidance and support where necessary. This holistic approach, grounded in collaboration and expertise, is essential for fostering continuous improvement and ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all students.

HB2612 threatens to disrupt this vital framework by potentially transferring accreditation authority away from the State Board of Education. Such a move risks politicizing the accreditation process and subjecting it to arbitrary interpretations of the law, rather than informed decision-making based on educational best practices. Accreditation should never be wielded as a punitive tool or subjected to the whims of shifting political agendas.

I implore you to consider the far-reaching implications of HB2612 and to uphold the autonomy and authority of the State Board of Education in matters of school accreditation. Let us preserve the integrity of our educational system by entrusting accreditation to those with the requisite expertise, understanding, and commitment to student success.

Thank you for your attention to this crucial matter.

Sincerely,

Katie McDonald
Education Consultant
2014 Kansas Region 1 Elementary Teacher of the Year

February 1, 2024

Chairperson Williams and the K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

The state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform its duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or disagreements on how funding dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. Districts can review the process if schools need to show growth or meet expectations, while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district. It is not for use as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department with the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts, and the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is that KSDE must perform a state audit to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. Their job is to review those numbers, not why our numbers might have changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload, and adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

When considering the proposed bill, I ask you to consider why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education. Knowing the history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is meant by "fully funded." Schools should refrain from being caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws, which diverts us from our actual role of educating the students of Kansas.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and **locally** elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and their daily work. If schools intentionally break the law, our esteemed and respected local school boards are fully capable of handling the issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eryn A. Norton Moland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eryn" being particularly prominent.

Mrs. Eryn A. Norton Moland
Kansas Educator, 2009-Present

The Father's House

02/01/2024

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

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One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Sincerely,

Marissa Moore
Early Learning Coordinator

Jae Moyer (Representing self)
(913-) 636-2331
jaemoyer@gmail.com

HB 2612- Requiring school districts to be in compliance with all state laws and rules and regulations to be accredited and requiring the state board of education to establish a process to challenge determinations of such compliance.

OPPONENT

Hearing Date: 2/5/2024

Chair Williams and members of the House K-12 Budget committee:

I oppose HB 2612. I believe this policy would be a detriment to our world-class public schools in Kansas, and that you should not support the bill.

First, the bill only covers public schools and does not hold private schools in Kansas to the same standards. I also don't believe that we should be putting our public schools under a strict scrutiny to achieve a statutorial standard when, in fact, the Kansas Legislature itself has not met a statutorial obligation to fully fund special education in our state.

As a Kansan, I believe that our public education systems are highly important, and a large reason why many families move to Kansas in the first place. It would not be in our best interest to do things that would put into question the integrity of our public education systems when there isn't a reason to.

I also urge you to think of the negative impact this might have on students if their school, for whatever reason, loses their accreditation. Students applying for college may have a harder time being accepted, and schools may face uphill battles to regain that accreditation. It's not fair to the bright students who are the future of our state to put them in that position.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote **NO** on HB 2612. Thank you.



February 1, 2024

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform its established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

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In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Jenny Nash
Principal
Vermillion Elementary
jnash@usd266.com
C: 913.731.7114

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to read to my written testimony on HB2612. My name is Curtis Nightingale and I am a registered Republican in Kansas, and former office holder myself. I also happen to be a professional educator. As I have watched my chose profession be attacked and maligned by those elected to represent ALL of Kansas—specifically my fellow Republicans—I am left questioning why is this happening? I have spent my life dedicated to the betterment of the students of our great state. I hold multiple master’s degrees in my field and yet, I see my representatives do little to represent me, or the families I serve. As I review this bill, it is clear there is an assumption that I, as well as other school districts, are not following the established laws of Kansas.

Once upon a time, the Republican Party Platform was about small government and local control. The party I see before me with their banned books lists, overreach on local control in the form of open enrollment, and attempts to usurp public funds for private interests is not that party any longer. To now threaten school accreditation of Districts across the state through the manipulation and interpretation of laws created to further expand governmental control over local elected boards with what amounts to “busy work,” e.g. website postings, printed legal notices, and seat counting to name a few, is a new low. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who has the staff, skills, understanding, and expertise working with schools and school districts and the resources to support all schools. Not a battalion of auditors and lobbyists.

I won’t get into the failure of the State Legislature to follow their own laws regarding regular and special education funding so as to avoid the intentional manipulation and interpretation of those laws to avoid doing the right thing.

In summary, Kansas schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I’m sure our boards can handle the issue. Aren’t there other issues our dually elected representatives could or should be addressing?

Do the right thing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Nightingale', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

South Hutchinson, Kansas

Adrienne Nuñez

adenunez1983@gmail.com

HB2612 Requiring school districts to be in compliance with all state laws and rules and regulations to be accredited and requiring the state board of education to establish a process to challenge determinations of such compliance.

Position: Opponent

February, 1st, 2024

Greetings,

My name is Adrienne Nuñez, and I work in the non-profit sector here in Kansas. I was born and raised in Lawrence, and I currently live here with my husband and our child, who we would like to continue to raise here in Kansas. I oppose bill HB2612 (No Title). I am proud to be a Kansan because, for me, it means we fight for equality. This bill holds the accreditation of private and public schools to two unequal standards. Holding a school's accreditation hostage to force them not to teach our true history as a state and nation is a form of coercion. Coercion is a tactic used by abusers to have power and control over others. I want my child to know we live in a state that respects all people, and treats them equally. The way things have been going here, I'm not sure that we will be able to do that for much longer. Please vote against bill HB2612.

Thank you,

Adrienne Nuñez

Central Plains Elementary-Holyrood
600 South Main, Holyrood, KS, 67450
785-252-3666
Jane Oeser, Principal

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to read my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and locally elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

It is sad that public education continues to have to justify everything to you up in Topeka. I have been an educator for over 35 years and do not understand why we don't have people in Topeka fighting to protect the educational system for so many students in our state. I encourage you to come out and visit our school and see the great things we are providing for so many wonderful children. Please put our Kansas children first in your decisions.

Sincerely,

Jane Oeser, Proud Principal

Testimony before House K-12 Budget Committee
Feb. 5, 2024
HB 2612– Relating to school district accreditation
Mike O’Neal – Kansas Policy Institute
Oral testimony in SUPPORT
mike@onealconsultingks.com

Madam Chair and members of the Committee

Thanks for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2612. The bill was introduced in Committee by Rep. Thomas at my request on behalf of KPI.

By the reaction it’s received since being scheduled for hearing, it’s having the intended effect. The bill is intended as a platform for having an open and candid discussion of our current system of school district accreditation. If we’re going to have an accreditation requirement that satisfies the intent of the existing statute, we can no longer ignore its failure to stimulate and incentivize improvement in student performance and the quality of instruction.

Opponents focus on the proposed new language. Let’s start with existing law. SBOE was to adopt an accreditation system “**based on improvement in performance that equals or exceeds the educational goals set forth in K.S.A. 72-3218c... and is measurable.**” All districts were to be held accountable through accreditation rules and regulations. The SBOE was to ensure that all school districts and every school had programs and initiatives in place for providing the capacities in statute.

The accountability measures were to be applied both at the district level **and** at the school level. If a school was not fully accredited and a corrective action plan is required, that report and any subsequent reports regarding a district’s progress toward full accreditation must be published on the KSDE website. If a school is not accredited (never happens) the superintendent must appear before the respective Education Committees.

The SBOE is to provide for statewide assessments in the core areas of math, science, reading and social studies and must ensure compatibility between the statewide assessments and the curriculum standards.

If the SBOE determines that a district has failed to meet accreditation requirements, the SBOE is to notify the district of the failure and upon receiving the notice the local board is “encouraged” to reallocate the resources necessary to remedy all deficiencies.

That’s current law. Many have been shocked to learn that to meet these standards, the SBOE apparently does not require that districts comply with existing state laws and rules. Some of the opposition comments I’ve read have tried to trivialize state law by citing minor infractions that could conceivably endanger a district’s accreditation. Instead, let’s talk about the most glaring examples that unquestionably impact student learning.

- Twice documented LPA studies finding that audited districts were not targeting at-risk funds in the manner required by law.
- Utilizing un-proven at-risk programs not based on peer-reviewed research.
- Chronic failure to allocate resources toward instruction notwithstanding constitutionally adequate funding.
- Districts still using now debunked literacy instruction after the SBOE has directed the use of LETRS,(Science of Reading)
- The systemic failure to evaluate and make educational adjustments as a result of required longitudinal tracking of students.
- Reallocating resources required pursuant to the building-based needs assessment law.

KSDE defines “Accredited” as meaning: “the system is in good standing (compliance) with the State Board, and that they have provided conclusive evidence of growth in student performance. In addition, the system has provided conclusive evidence of an intentional, quality growth process.” (From KSDE website)

If our school district accreditation law is to have any meaning at all, there needs to be accountability. I suspect that the main reason no school district has been unaccredited in modern history is the fear that parents will become concerned with the quality of education their children are getting. Also, no superintendent wants to have to come over to the Legislature to explain why they haven’t met accreditation standards. Districts where student outcomes are declining rather than improving don’t want the stigma of non-accreditation.

Isn’t that like the discussions we have about social promotion of students, where they are not performing proficiently for grade level work but are promoted to the next grade each and every year in spite of falling further behind? Certainly, no one wants the “stigma” of being held back. But is it worse to graduate with the stigma of being non-proficient as a teenager or is it worse to be held back in 3rd grade so that the student can be proficient in reading, a key to success in the succeeding grade levels?

Isn’t it time to “rip the band aid off” and come to grips with the fact that our accreditation system is broken and needs to be fixed? The SBOE is working on this but that process has been extremely slow. The process must now include legislative input. Remember, Art. 6 §2 of the Kansas Constitution directed the legislature to create the SBOE, granting it general supervision of the public schools and providing that:

“The state board shall perform such other duties as may be provided by law.”

The status of public education in Kansas has reached a crisis point. Improvement will need to be an “all hands on deck” effort. That includes school districts, local boards, teachers, KSDE, SBOE, parents, and the Legislature. And that includes changing the status quo to something that

is truly *“reasonably calculated to have all Kansas public education students meet or exceed the educational goals set forth in K.S.A. 72-3218c”* (Rose standards.)

Michael Poppa
Executive Director
Mainstream
contact@mainstream.vote

House Committee on K-12 Education Budget
Chair, Rep. Kristey Williams
Hearing: February 5, 2024

Opposition Written Testimony for HB 2612 – *Requiring school districts to be in compliance with all state laws and rules and regulations to be accredited and requiring the state board of education to establish a process to challenge determinations of such compliance.*

Chair Williams and Members of the Committee,

Mainstream opposes HB 2612.

The right to a suitable education is guaranteed by the Kansas Constitution for all children regardless of income, ability, race, or any other factor. This guarantee of public education is essential to meeting the academic and career readiness needs of our students, free of discrimination and religious or ideological influences.

HB 2612 circumvents the oversight of education professionals on the state school board and places the future of public schools students in the hand of politicians. What's more, it only places this burden on public education, not private or other non-public schools. This bill holds public schools to an even stricter standard while private schools to continue admission policies that may harm our most vulnerable students.

If, as some legislators have suggested, the public schools are "failing" some students, then it is within the power of the state to fix that. The legislature should work with the Kansas Department of Education and State Board of Education to guarantee that constitutionally suitable public education is available to all Kansas children.

We respectfully urge you to oppose passage of HB 2612.

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612
(785) 296-7436
mari-lynn.poskin@house.ks.gov



12924 HOWE DRIVE
LEAWOOD, KANSAS 66209
(913) 735-0064

MARI-LYNN POSKIN
20TH DISTRICT

February 1, 2024

K-12 Budget Committee

Madam Chair and Committee Members,

Thank you for hearing my opponent testimony today. The theme of our session so far has been “unintended consequences” of hastily passed legislation and hounding districts on compliance with at risk funding, when the informational hearings clearly demonstrate it is near impossible to be in compliance.

I see a plethora of disastrous consequences of this bill and will discuss them in my oral testimony once I receive clarifications of how the bill could play out from the Revisor. These consequences are either flaws of the bill, or features.

Thank you, committee. I will stand for questions.

Mari-Lynn Poskin

Bucklin Unified School District

Box 8 – 422 South Main – Bucklin, Ks – 620 826 3241

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Sincerely,

Amy Ricks, Superintendent Bucklin USD 459

Testimony in Opposition Against HB 2612

Iridescent Riffel

1. Bill only applies to public school districts, not private and voucher schools!

No consequences for anything like this for private schools:

<https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/crime/article284881567.html>

2. Remember the FAILED voucher bill would be 100's of millions of dollars and not collect a single piece of data, EVER, on student performance and they exempt from ANY statutory regulations:

http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2023_24/asures/sb83/

3. "New Sec. 15. {14.} Nothing in the sunflower education equity act shall be construed to permit any governmental agency to exercise control or supervision over any nonpublic school or home school. Any qualified school or tutor that accepts a payment from a parent of a qualified student participating in the program is not an agent of this state."

4. Last year in conference committee, they added provisions to allow private schools to be waived for some accrediting processes for private schools to get accredited, yet we want to jeopardize public school accreditation.

5. This committee has spent two weeks discussing districts out of compliance with at risk funding statutes, while simultaneously noting how impossible it is to meet the evidence based practices curriculum standards.

6. Requiring school district compliance with statute while the committee and legislature has been out of compliance with statutory SPED funding since 2012, is the height of hypocrisy.

7. This sets the stage to disaccredit our public schools (ONLY) when the legislature passes legislation outlawing the teaching of true history (ant CRT laws). See Oklahoma:

<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/two-okla-districts-get-downgraded-accreditations-for-violating-states-anti-crt-law/2022/08>

Unified School District No. 219

P.O. Box 157, Minneola, KS 67865-0157

Luke M. Ritchie
MHS Principal
620-885-4611



February 1, 2024

Dear Chairperson Williams and K-12 Committee,

Thank you for dedicating your time to review my written testimony on HB2612. Upon my examination of this bill, it seems to assume that school districts are not adhering to established laws.

I firmly believe that the state legislature should empower the State Board of Education to fulfill its designated responsibilities. School accreditation goes beyond mere numerical indicators or disagreements on financial allocations and reporting procedures. Schools are obligated to comply with state laws and regulations set by the State Board of Education. In cases where schools do not exhibit growth or meet expectations, districts are granted an opportunity to assess their processes while receiving guidance and support from the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). Accreditation significantly impacts every student in a school district and should not be wielded as punitive measures based on differing interpretations of the law. Accreditation should remain under the jurisdiction of KSDE, which is equipped with the staff, skills, understanding, and experience in collaboration with schools and school districts – providing the necessary resources to support all schools.

In regards to lawfulness and interpretation of law, one might question why the legislature has been able to contravene the law for so many years by not fully funding special education. Considering the historical context of the Kansas budget, it raises concerns that it took multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education – potentially due to varying interpretations of what constitutes full funding. Let's not entangle schools in the middle of interpreting laws; rather, let them focus on their primary role of educating students.

In summary, schools are overseen by the State School Board and locally elected boards of education. I urge you to permit our local boards to monitor local schools. If there are instances of intentional law-breaking, I am confident that our boards can address the issue effectively.

Regards,



Luke M. Ritchie, principal

~ serving public education since 2007

Minneola High School
111 E. Locust St., Minneola, KS 67865
Phone: 620.885.4611

Kristen Satterwhite
kristenhs@mac.com
Date of hearing: Feb. 5, 2024

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to HB 2612.

My understanding is that HB 2612 would remove accreditation from public schools who are not in compliance with all state laws and rules and regulations.

With all of the anti-DEI bills being introduced nationwide, I can only infer that this bill is a precursor to any such future law here in Kansas.

The thought that my child's educational future could be jeopardized if they are taught a true version of American history is astonishingly disappointing to me.

My biracial children attend public schools in Kansas and I very much value and feel gratitude for the education they are both receiving. It is important to us as a family that our children learn true history. There are so many important American stories that I was denied in my own public school upbringing and I feel cheated as an adult when I learn of yet another important moment in American history that was never told to my generation in school because it was uncomfortable.

We all make mistakes and we are teaching our children that we have pride in them when they own their mistakes and learn and grow from them. I want my children to have pride in their country in the same way.

Please do not negatively impact our children's education by voting in favor of this bill.

Thank you.

Kristen Satterwhite

Marian Seacat
Bucklin Elementary Music Teacher
Bucklin, KS 67834

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Thank you,

Marian Seacat

Matthew Adam Sims
1125 Wheatridge Rd.
Colby, KS 67701

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

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In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Sims", written in a cursive style.

Matthew Adam Sims



Kansas PTA
715 SW 10th Street, Topeka KS 66612
www.kansas-pta-legislative.org
kansaspta@gmail.com

February 1, 2024

Written Only Testimony to House K-12 Budget Committee

Honorable Chair, Representative Kristey Williams

Committee Assistant, K.12.Budget@house.ks.gov, 785-296-3971

Room 286-N, State Capitol Building

Opposed [House Bill 2612](#) – a redundant and punitive accreditation bill.

Hearing: Monday, February 5, 2024, 3:30 PM Room 546-S

Honorable Chair Williams and Committee Members,

The Kansas PTA is comprised of volunteers, many of whom have full time jobs, family obligations and community service commitments. This testimony will be brief, given the very short turn-around time required, yet again. However, our brevity should not be conflated with our strong opposition to HB 2612.

This bill on school accreditation, at best does nothing to help Kansas kids, and is more likely to disrupt learning and harm Kansas public school students along with their communities. The underlying assumptions and punitive approach of this bill are in opposition to the Kansas PTA mission and [Standing Positions and Legislative Priorities](#).

- Nearly 90% of all Kansas students and parents rely on a robust public education system that is responsive to the ever-changing demands on high school graduates.
- The Kansas public school system is the only institution dedicated to providing a quality education to 500,000 Kansas child, regardless of their unique needs and the needs of the community – and under the limitations of the level of adequacy and equity with which the Kansas legislature chooses to allocate state aid.
- Compliance is a component of the KSDE and SBOE accreditation requirements. KSDE has a comprehensive, preventive approach to support a school district that may be struggling well before a complete loss of accreditation would be warranted.
- Public school superintendents, 2,000 elected school board members and their professional associations (e.g., KASB, USA|KS) are intentional about remaining in compliance with state law and regulations.

- KASB and big districts hire attorneys to monitor changes in state laws and regulations and craft policies and procedures to remain in compliance with – for what we can only estimate must number in the hundreds if not thousands!
- This bill proposes a punitive, high stakes approach that places students and communities at risk. The language in the bill is recklessly vague: lines 34-35 “Any school district not in compliance with such laws and rules and regulations shall not be accredited.”
- The Kansas State Board of Education has authority over educational policy, such as accreditation, under Article VI of the Kansas Constitution. Kansas students are best served following the recommendations of the dedicated educational professionals at KSDE.
- The performance of Kansas public schools continues to beat the odds. The 2022-2023 school year is the new baseline. We can expect to see improvement from this point, with the final year of restoration to state aid for general education in 2023, with the disruptions of the global pandemic diminished, and with the promise of full state funding for special education at the statutory 92% of excess costs.

Kansas PTA strongly urges members of this committee to vote NO on this punitive bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Denise Sultz, Kansas PTA President
President@kansas-pta.org
 Twitter [@KsPTALeg](https://twitter.com/KsPTALeg)

Cc: Devin Wilson, VP of Advocacy
 Rachel Russell, Legislative Liaison
 Mary Sinclair, PhD, Kansas PTA Advocacy Team

THE PTA POSITION

Kansas PTA is a nonpartisan association that promotes the welfare of children and youth. The PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party. Rather, we advocate for policies and legislation that affect Kansas youth in alignment with our legislative platform and priorities. [PTA mission and purpose](#) have remained the same since our inception over 100 years ago, focused on facilitating every child’s potential and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Jonathan Smith

jonathansmith0502@gmail.com

HB 2612 (School District compliance and accreditation)

OPPOSITION Testimony

Hearing Date February 5th, 2024

Chair Kristey Williams and committee persons,

This is the type of legislation that forces schools, who are already understaffed, overburdened, underpaid, and overworked, to additionally follow every mention of every rule at the state level with fear of losing accreditation.

There are already processes in place that can and do handle this process in a fair and measured way. Passing this bill would force schools to lose accreditation in a process that would be *much* faster than the process would be to gain it back.

This would adversely affect the school district, the schools, the teachers, the administration, and most importantly the future of the students, if they are unable to take their education to a college of their choosing.

There is also a very notable lack of wording in the bill to address **private** schools. This would make this legislation one-sided in application toward the already financially burdened public schools that the legislature refuses to fund adequately.

Instead of this bill, why don't you fulfill your prior obligations of fully funding the special education programs that you have been out of compliance with since 2012.

Finally, this bill was set for a hearing with such a small window, that I had to leave work early just to be able to fill out this testimony in time. This is incredibly irresponsible as a committee, and I expect better transparency moving forward.

Please vote in **OPPOSITION** to HB 2612.

Thank You,

Jonathan Smith



Unified School District 493

Board of Education Office

House Committee on K-12 Education Budget
February 5, 2024
House Bill 2612

Chairperson Williams and members of the Committee,

Thank you for taking time to consider my written testimony on HB2612. While I understand the importance of upholding laws and maintaining educational standards, I firmly believe that this approach is flawed and warrants reconsideration. There are several key reasons why this course of action is detrimental and should be reevaluated.

Firstly, it is essential to acknowledge that the legislative body itself is not immune to violating laws. By stripping a school of its accreditation based on the violation of a law, it creates a double standard and undermines the credibility of the legislative body. It is crucial to ensure that all stakeholders are held to the same standards and are subject to the same consequences for non-compliance.

Secondly, the language of the law in question may be too broad and lack specificity. This broadness increases the likelihood of unintentional violations, leaving schools vulnerable to punitive measures without even being aware of their transgressions. It is important to create legislation that is clear, concise, and provides schools with a reasonable understanding of what is expected of them. This will promote a fair and just system where schools have the opportunity to rectify any unintended violations.

Lastly, the responsibility of accrediting schools should lie with the Kansas State Department of Education, rather than the legislative body. Accreditation is a complex process that requires expertise and in-depth knowledge of the education system. The State Department of Education is better equipped to evaluate schools based on a comprehensive set of criteria and make informed decisions regarding their accreditation status. By entrusting this responsibility to the appropriate educational authorities, we ensure a more streamlined and effective accreditation process.

In summary, taking away a school's accreditation based solely on the violation of a law is a flawed approach that needs reconsideration. The legislative body should ensure that it holds itself to the same standards it expects from schools, and the language of the law should be precise and specific to prevent unintended violations. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the Kansas State Department of Education, as the educational experts, to accredit schools and make informed decisions regarding their accreditation status. By addressing these concerns, we can establish a fair and just system that promotes educational excellence while also upholding the principles of justice and accountability.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Brian D. Smith
bsmith@usd493.com
620-202-0940



Marshall–Nemaha County Educational Services Cooperative



316 Main ♦ Seneca, Kansas 66538 ♦ Ph: 785-336-2181 ♦ Fax: 785-336-2182

USD #115 Nemaha Central

USD #380 Vermillion

Shana Steinlage - Director

February 1, 2024

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written opposition testimony on HB2612. I currently am a Director of Special Education for the Marshall-Nemaha Educational Services Cooperative. I have held positions in public education since 1999 as a special education teacher at the middle and elementary levels, at-risk teacher, elementary teacher, Building Administrator and District Level Administrator. I also serve on various committees at the state and local level that support public education in Kansas. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever encountered only sees numbers and sometimes need my support to understand what the numbers mean and where the numbers have come from. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Knowing the history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue with the system of checks and balances already in place at districts and schools across the state.

I wholeheartedly oppose HB2612 as it does not support the students and educators in our Kansas Schools.

Sincerely,

Shana Steinlage
Director of Special Education



Dr. Anna Stubblefield, KCKPS/USD 500 Superintendent of Schools
anna.stubblefield@kckps.org
Written only testimony **in opposition** to House Bill 2612
House K-12 Education Budget Committee Hearing on February 5, 2024

Honorable Chair Williams and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to HB 2612.

The proposed bill would require school districts to comply with all state laws, rules, and regulations to be accredited; requiring school districts to notify parents in writing if the school district is not accredited; requiring the state board to establish a process to challenge a determination of school district compliance with state laws and rules and regulations.

This bill poses a significant threat to the educational landscape in our state. While I understand the importance of maintaining standards in education, I am concerned that HB 2612 takes an overly punitive approach by threatening to pull accreditation from any school that fails to comply with every state rule and regulation. It is essential to acknowledge that, despite our best efforts, no educational institution is immune to occasional lapses in compliance.

Education is a dynamic and complex field, and schools must navigate a myriad of regulations to provide the best possible learning environment for our students. Imposing such severe consequences for minor infractions is impractical and counterproductive to the overall goal of fostering a robust and innovative education system.

I want to highlight that the threat of losing accreditation could disproportionately impact schools that serve vulnerable populations or those facing resource constraints. Rather than encouraging continuous improvement and collaboration, this bill instills fear and diverts valuable resources toward compliance checks rather than educational enrichment.

Instead of an all-or-nothing approach, we should work towards a more nuanced system that addresses compliance issues through collaboration between schools and regulatory bodies. This could involve regular audits, targeted support for schools in need, and a focus on fostering a culture of compliance rather than punitive measures.

I urge you to reconsider the potential consequences of HB 2612 and its impact on the educational landscape in Kansas. Collaborative dialogue and thoughtful consideration of alternative solutions will undoubtedly lead to a more effective and fair approach to improving academic standards.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Chairperson Williams and members of the K-12 committee,

I appreciate your time in considering my written testimony on HB2612. As I examined this bill, it appears to assume that school districts are not adhering to established laws.

I strongly believe that the state legislature should empower the State Board of Education to fulfill its established responsibilities. School accreditation goes beyond mere numbers or disagreements over budget allocations or reporting procedures. Schools are mandated to comply with state laws and regulations set forth by the State Board of Education. When schools fail to demonstrate growth or meet expectations, districts are given the opportunity to review their processes, with guidance and support from the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). Accreditation impacts every student in a school district and should not be wielded as a punitive measure based on a particular interpretation of the law. Accreditation should remain under the purview of the department that possesses the staff, skills, understanding, and experience in working with schools and districts, as well as the resources to support all schools. Another concern regarding the bill is the requirement for a state audit by KSDE to reinstate a district to accredited status. Every auditor I have encountered focuses solely on numbers, without considering the reasons behind changes in those numbers. Auditors are already burdened with heavy caseloads, so increasing their responsibilities will only detract from the quality of their work.

One might question why the legislature has been able to disregard the law for so many years by not fully funding special education. Considering the history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Perhaps this is due to differing interpretations of what constitutes full funding. Let us not entangle schools during interpreting laws and divert them from their primary role of educating students.

In conclusion, schools are governed by the State School Board and locally elected boards of education. I urge you to allow our local boards to oversee educators and their daily work. If there are deliberate violations of the law, I trust that our boards can address these issues effectively.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Sincerely,
Dr. Sylvia Trevino-Maack
School psychologist



Every Student. **EVERY DAY.**

Caney Valley Unified School District #436

Office of the Superintendent

700 East Bullpup Blvd

Caney, KS 67333

Phone: (620)879-9200

Fax: (620)879-9209

Blake A. Vargas Superintendent

House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

Testimony on HB 2612

Written by Blake A. Vargas, Superintendent

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

I truly appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony regarding HB2612.

At Caney Valley, we have embraced the motto, "Every Student. Every Day," and strive to not only meet standards for accreditation but exceed them. School accreditation for our district is so much more than a series of numbers, completing reports, or debating how dollars should be spent. Every decision we make every single day as educators is how we can most effectively impact our students. We understand that schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. In those instances where schools don't show growth or meet expectations, KSDE provides support and guidance to help districts review their processes. If the goal is truly about our children and their education, accreditation should not be used as a punishment based on interpretation of the law. Instead, accreditation should only remain in the department with the tools, experience and understanding to support schools and their students, which is KSDE.

To strip accreditation from a district and only allow reinstatement after a KSDE audit is especially concerning. In my experience, auditors are by their nature, trained to focus on numbers, and not necessarily the factors leading to changes that have affected those numbers. Given the current workload burdening the auditors, increasing their responsibilities could inevitably compromise the quality and accuracy of their work.

It is only fair to ask that the same expectations be placed on our legislature that is being asked of our school systems. Considering the state's budget history, it took multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education, possibly due to differing interpretations of what constitutes full funding. Regardless, I believe it's imperative not to entangle schools in legal interpretations, diverting them from their core mission of educating students.

Schools are sufficiently overseen and governed by the State School Board and our locally elected Board of Education. At Caney Valley, our local board, who have a vested and sincere interest in our schools, and more importantly, our students, ensure that our educators adhere to the highest standards. If there was ever any intentional breaking of any laws, our Board of Education would certainly address the issue.

Blake A. Vargas – Superintendent

USD#436 - Caney Valley Schools

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and Bucklin, KS elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Sincerely
Danielle Vigness
SKACD 613
USD 459
K-12 SPED Educator

House K-12 Education Budget Committee
HB 2612
February 5, 2024
Written Opponent Testimony by: Bryce Wachs

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns regarding HB2612. After a thorough review, I find several aspects of the bill troubling, particularly in how it might alter the dynamics of school accreditation and oversight.

The bill appears predicated on the assumption that school districts may not be in compliance with existing laws, a standpoint that arguably misrepresents the dedication of our schools to uphold legal and educational standards. I would like to draw attention to several key points in this discussion.

The State Board of Education already plays a crucial role in overseeing school accreditation. This process involves more than a simple analysis of numbers or financial considerations; it requires a deep understanding of educational practices and standards. Accreditation should not be used as a punitive measure based on subjective interpretations of the law but should remain under the purview of those with educational expertise and experience focused on continuous improvement.


Another proposal within the bill that raises concern is the establishment of a process allowing individuals to challenge determinations of school district compliance or noncompliance with state laws and regulations. While accountability is vital, such a process could potentially lead to a proliferation of challenges based on varied interpretations of compliance, potentially overwhelming the system and diverting resources from educational improvement efforts. Ensuring fairness and objectivity in this process is critical to prevent it from becoming a tool for undue interference in school operations.

Reflecting on the broader legislative context, historical challenges such as underfunding special and general education highlight the complexities of interpreting and meeting legal obligations in education. It is imperative not to entangle schools in these complexities further, detracting from their core mission of educating students.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider the pivotal roles that local boards of education and the State School Board play in governing our schools. They are best equipped to monitor, evaluate, and address any issues of legal compliance within our education system. Introducing additional, potentially counterproductive legislative mandates could undermine their work. Empowering these entities to continue their efforts without undue legislative interference is crucial for maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of our educational system.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my perspective on HB2612 and its implications for our schools.

Sincerely,



Bryce Wachs
Superintendent of Schools
Fort Larned USD 495
bryce.wachs@gmail.com

February 1, 2024

Chairperson Williams and K-12 Committee:

Thank you for taking time to read my written testimony on HB2612. I try to assume positive intentions, but as I reviewed this bill, there appears to be an underlying assumption that school districts are not following established laws. I disagree.

In regard to complying with statutory requirements, I would be remiss if I didn't remind the committee of the "elephant in the room", which is that the legislature has been breaking the law for over a decade now by not fully funding special education. The old cliché that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones is fitting as it relates to this legislation. I would also submit that constituents are tired of the politicians' attacks on educators and public education. I observed this frustration and disgust at a legislative coffee last spring in Augusta. Many people there were appalled and fed up with the way that politicians conduct business in Topeka.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform its established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the current caseloads, so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

Districts are governed by the Kansas State Board of Education and LOCALLY elected boards. The term "local control" was often used during the pandemic by politicians in Topeka to push decisions off to local boards. You can't pick and choose when you are a fan of local control. You believe in it or you don't. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform.

In summary, this bill should not make it out of committee, and the Legislature should spend its valuable time figuring out how to meet the statutory requirements of funding special education.

It's far past time to move beyond the finger-pointing and petty antics, and begin working together for the students and families in Kansas.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brett White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B' and a distinct 'W'.

Brett White
Andover Public Schools Superintendent



13939 Diagonal Rd., PO Box 160
Clearwater KS 67026

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Sincerely,

Lori Jensen Wilson

Director of Special Initiatives

Orion Education and Training

www.orioneducation.org

February 5, 2024

**Opponent (Written-Only) Testimony to the House K-12 Education Budget Committee
Bill HB 2612**

Dear Chair & members of the committee,

I urge you to vote NO on bill HB 2612. Tying a school district's accreditation to its compliance with all applicable laws and regulations could be extremely detrimental to any number of Kansas students and Kansas communities. It could also bring costly litigation to our state.

Graduating from an unaccredited school could hurt a student's chances for college admission, receiving financial aid or scholarships, and general employment.

Kansas communities with unaccredited public schools could see property values decrease, businesses move to other locations, and so on. Quality (accredited) public schools are economic drivers.

Accreditation should be based on the district's ability to meet a certain level of educational standards. Determining accreditation should be the job of the Kansas Department of Education and the State Board of Education, not the legislature.

Please consider whether it makes sense for an entire student body and community to be punished if a school district were to have a misstep with any of our current or future laws on the books. Below are just a few examples:

- New open enrollment law that could be confusing in its implementation
- Law requiring at-risk funds be used on programs with a 5-year study, yet very few if any programs are studied for that long
- Laws passed in other states that could be considered in Kansas, such as prohibiting teachers from using a student's preferred pronouns

Missteps involving any of the above would have nothing to do with whether the district was meeting the academic needs of students. Yet students would lose out on opportunities and communities could see their economies crumble.

I urge you to vote no on bill HB 2612. But, should this bill move forward, I ask that:

- Private schools receiving our public tax dollars through the Tax Credit Scholarship program also be included under this law
- The legislature also follows all applicable laws and regulations, such as the one to fund 92% of excess special education costs

Respectfully, I hope that you can see that the punishment does not fit the crime under bill HB 2612.

Erin Woods
Parent of recent high school graduates
Leawood, KS
ewoods999@gmail.com

East Central Kansas Cooperative in Education

Interlocal #614
600 HIGH ST – PO BOX 41
BALDWIN CITY, KS 66006

Daniel Wray, Director
dwray@eckce.com

Ph: 785-594-2737
Fax: 785-594-6815

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. I am the director of ECKCE, serving districts 348, 491 and 289. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

I believe the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts; the resources to support all schools.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. Every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. They pay no attention as to why our numbers might have changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with the caseload so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work.

One could ask why the legislature has been able to break the law for so many years by not fully funding special education? Knowing the past history of the Kansas budget, why did it take multiple lawsuits before the legislature fully funded general education? Possibly because of the discrepancy in interpretation of what is fully funded. Don't get schools caught up in the middle of interpreting the laws and divert them from their role of educating the students.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor educators and the daily work they perform. If they are intentionally breaking the law, I'm sure our boards can handle the issue.

Daniel Wray
ECKCE Executive Director

Providing *Special Education Services* to:

**Baldwin
USD 348**

**Eudora
USD 491**

**Wellsville
USD 289**



"Where Excellence and
Education Meet"

LABETTE COUNTY

Unified School District 506

P. O. Box 189 • 401 S. High School Street • Altamont, KS 67330
(620) 784-5326 • Fax: (620) 784-5879

www.usd506.org

February 1, 2024

Chairperson Williams and the K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my oral testimony regarding HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, it appears to assume that school districts are not following established laws which we do not believe is accurate, and therefore we stand opposed to this bill.

I believe that the state legislature should allow the State Board of Education to perform its established duties. School accreditation is more than a series of numbers or a disagreement on how funds should be used or how a report should be completed. Schools are required to follow state laws and State Board of Education regulations. If schools fail to show growth or meet expectations, districts are allowed to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used punitively based on the interpretation of a law.

Accreditation should remain in the hands of the department that has the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts, and the resources to support all schools.

There is another issue with the bill which requires the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) to conduct a state audit before reinstating the district to its accredited status. The concern here is that the auditors only see numbers and do not pay attention to the reasons why the numbers might have changed. Moreover, the auditors are already overloaded with work, and adding more duties to their plate will only reduce the quality of their work.

It's worth asking why the legislature hasn't fully funded special education for so many years, and why it took multiple lawsuits before they fully funded general education. This could be due to a discrepancy in interpretation of what "fully funded" means. It's important to not burden schools with interpreting laws, as their role is to educate students.

In summary, the State School Board and locally elected boards of education govern schools. Local boards should be responsible for monitoring educators and their daily work. If any intentional law-breaking occurs, our boards can handle the issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Wyrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail.

Dr. John Wyrick
Superintendent of Schools
Labette County USD 506

From: [neisha_benson](#)
To: [K12 Budget](#)
Subject: Are you joking?
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 1:51:24 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

I do not pay public taxes to have rich people use that money to pay a private school. A lot of these “schools “ often have zero accountability on curriculums, to anyone. I also do not pay public taxes to see our children being less educated than I was. You pass HB2612 and you will draw Kansas to the attention of our national press. We Kansans have to deal with your shenanigans and look like we are all bible beating Christ crusaders. We Kansans are accustomed to being associated with positive things! Brown v. Topeka was inspiring to the whole civil rights movement and so was voting down the abortion ban. Please do not make me write further, I will get angry and you may not understand all of the words because you went to private school.

Thank you,
Neisha Benson Yost (yes, that Benson)

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Sherrine M](#)
To: [K12 Budget](#); [Mainstream Coalition](#); [Kristey Williams](#);
Subject: Bill number: HB 2612 | Written-only testimony.
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 2:49:30 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

a). Individual citizen taxpayer

b) contact information:

c) Bill number title/topic.

HB 2612. House K – 12 education Committee & conference rules 2024

d) Position on Bill:

opponent/oppose

e) Date of hearing:

February 5, 2024

Please vote "NO" on HB 2612.

This type of legislation sets the stage to remove accreditation to any public school (ONLY), once the legislature introduces a bill to ban the teaching of "true history"- (anti-CRT or anti-LGBTQ+ laws, as an example).

What's worse, this type of legislation will be harmful to the bright students who have plans to attend college or higher ed. If their high school isn't accredited when they apply for college, they could be denied admissions by no fault of their own.

It's also not fair to our public schools that they're expected to be held to a certain level of compliance with state statute when the KS Legislature itself hasn't met statutory requirements to fully fund special education.

Please vote "NO" on HB 2612.

Sincerely,

Sherrine McLaughlin

From: [Karl H Hanson Jr MD](#)
To: [K12 Budget](#)
Subject: HB 2612 written only, opposed testimony
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 2:20:13 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

- a) Karl H Hanson Jr MD / retired
- b)
- c) **HB 2612** Requiring school districts to be in compliance with all state laws and rules and regulations to be accredited and requiring the state board of education ([more](#))
- d) Opponent
- e) 5 February 2024

The bill only applies to public schools and therefore is unfair in placing its impact for good or for harm.

If the act would be appropriate why does it not apply to private schools as well or home schooling

It seems to be censorship by threat, and would result in harm to the students who's school is not accredited.

Why should we be afraid of information?

Please vote no on this bill.

Sincerely, Karl H Hanson Jr MD

From: [Rebecka Noel](#)
To: [K12 Budget](#)
Subject: HB 2612
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 1:51:57 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Please vote NO on HB 2612.

It is vital that all of our public schools are accredited. Kansas students could be denied admission to Universities if they graduate from a high school that is not accredited, no matter what their test scores and through no fault of their own.

My son attends the Shawnee Mission School district in Johnson County. In fact, we moved to Kansas so that he could attend that district. If accreditation is removed from public schools not only are you hurting Kansas students but you might force parents to move to a state where the public schools are accredited. Thus, creating a type of brain drain in our state. It also would hurt our local economies.

Passing HB 2612 would have a domino effect that would be long lasting and severe.

Sincerely,
Rebecka Noel
Prairie Village, KS

From: [Karen Craig](#)
To: [K12 Budget](#)
Subject: HB 2612
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 1:55:35 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

As the grandparent of a second grade public school student, I vehemently oppose this bill. I see no point in the legislature wasting time on something that isn't even an issue. Threatening public high schools with losing their accreditation is a detriment to any public high school graduates who seek a college degree.

Karen Craig
Olathe, KS

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android

From: [Lynn Kinsman](#)
To: [K12 Budget](#)
Subject: HB 2612
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 3:12:48 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

I am not in favor of HB 2612. This bill is throwing Kansas schools under the bus. We should all find the courage to support the truth. Especially concerning history. "We hold these truths to be self evident." Ringing any bells?

This is Kansas not North Korea.

Please save our public schools from draconian ideas of a few, and return to the fair minded ideas of a great generation.

Lynn Kinsman

Sent from my iPhone

From: [William Clark](#)
To: [K12 Budget](#)
Subject: HB2612
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 2:01:42 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Chairperson Williams and K-12 committee,

Thank you for taking time to listen to my written testimony on HB2612. As I reviewed this bill, there must be an assumption that school districts are not following established laws.

As a life-long Kansan with more than 25 yrs in public education, I believe the state legislature should continue to allow the State Board of Education to perform their established duties of their oversight of education in Kansas. School accreditation is so much more than a series of numbers, a disagreement on how dollars should be used or how a report should be completed. Public schools in Kansas are required to follow federal laws, state laws as well as the regulation set forth by the State Board of Education.

If schools don't show growth or meet the expectations, districts are provided the opportunity to review the process while KSDE provides guidance and support. Public schools constantly monitor their effective levels through examining academic monitoring, attendance, graduation, discipline, and through multiple surveys that are sent out to our parents and patrons. Accreditation affects every student in a school district and should not be used as a punitive punishment based on the interpretation of a law. Accreditation should remain in the hands of the Kansas State Board of Education and the Kansas State Department of Education who have the staff, skills, understanding, and experience working with schools and school districts.

Another concern with the bill is a state audit must be performed by KSDE to reinstate the district to accredited status. In my current position, every auditor I have ever come in contact with only sees numbers. It is the duty of the auditor to "audit" not to evaluate why student performance has changed. The auditors are already overwhelmed with their caseloads, so adding to their duties will only diminish the fidelity of their work. School districts receive multiple audits (State Audit, Special Education Audits & Compliance Checks, and their own financial audit). This does not count for any special audits that are sometimes requested/required.

Please do not get schools caught up in the middle between the legislature and the Dept of Education/State BOE of interpreting the laws and diverting them from their role of educating the students. The jobs and the roles of the proud Kansans that are down in the trenches every day, working with students from various backgrounds; rather it is ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic backgrounds, family backgrounds, intellectual backgrounds, etc... are already challenging enough.

In summary, the schools are governed by the State School Board and LOCALLY elected boards

of education. Please allow our local boards to monitor our own educators and the daily work they perform. There are already processes in place for families and patrons to use if they feel that laws and regulations are not being followed. I feel confident that with all the resources available to the board of education, that they can handle any issue thrown at them.

Respectfully,

William J. Clark
USD 330 Mission Valley
Patron, Parent, and Staff Member

From: [Braden Werner](#)
To: [K12 Budget](#)
Subject: Opposition of HB 2612
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 2:27:21 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Here is my testimony in opposition of HB 2612.

This bill only applies to public school districts, not private and voucher schools!

Remember the FAILED voucher bill would be 100's of millions of dollars and not collect a single piece of data, EVER, on student performance and they exempt from ANY statutory regulations:

http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2023_24/asures/sb83/

“New Sec. 15. {14.} Nothing in the sunflower education equity act shall be construed to permit any governmental agency to exercise control or supervision over any nonpublic school or home school. Any qualified school or tutor that accepts a payment from a parent of a qualified student participating in the program is not an agent of this state.”

Last year in conference committee, they added provisions to allow private schools to be waived for some accreditation processes (Can't remember this exactly, have asked research) for private schools to get accredited, yet we want to jeopardize public school accreditation.

We've spent two weeks discussing districts out of compliance with at-risk funding statutes, while simultaneously noting how impossible it is to meet the evidence based practices curriculum standards.

Requiring school district compliance with statute while the committee and legislature has been out of compliance with statutory SPED funding since 2012, is the height of hypocrisy.

This sets the stage to discredit our public schools (ONLY) when the legislature passes legislation outlawing the teaching of true history (ant CRT laws)

What about the students in these districts who are high performers and have dreams of attending elite colleges? They will be dinged in the admissions process due to transcripts from an unaccredited school district.

Respectfully,

Braden Werner

From: [Alan Wasserman](#)
To: [K12 Budget](#)
Subject: vote "NO" on HB 2612
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 4:07:42 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi,

I urge you to vote NO on HB2612.

This type of legislation sets the stage to remove accreditation to any public school (ONLY), once the legislature introduces a bill to ban the teaching of "true history"- (anti-CRT or anti-LGBTQ+ laws, as an example).

What's worse, this type of legislation will be harmful to the bright students who have plans to attend college or higher ed. If their high school isn't accredited when they apply for college, they could be denied admissions by no fault of their own.

It's also not fair to our public schools that they're expected to be held to a certain level of compliance with state statute when the KS Legislature itself hasn't met statutory requirements to fully fund special education.

I don't want Kansas to take a step back in education.

Thank you.

Respectfully,
Alan Wasserman

From: [Janell Conner](#)
To: [K12 Budget](#)
Subject: VOTE NO - HB 2612
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 2:00:26 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon,

I am writing to you today to urge you to vote NO on HB 2612. This bill only applies to public school districts, not private or voucher schools, which is absolutely ridiculous!

My daughter attends public school and is on an IEP as she has been diagnosed with Dyslexia. Last year House Bill 2322 updated Special Education to include dyslexia as a disability covered. What is alarming is that the Kansas Legislature refuses to fully fund Special Education in Kansas even though they are federally required to do so. Public schools are already severely strapped with funding for SPED, teachers to assist with SPED and I believe this is an attempt to further punish public schools in their testing scores as public schools can't cherry pick students and have to accept everyone. State standardized testing doesn't account for additional time in testing as instructed by the IEP, but those scores can further hurt public schools. Now HB 2612 attempts to further hurt our public schools and strip accreditations!

The attacks on public education by this legislature are infuriating! I watch each vote on education and vote against those who intentionally try to sabotage our public schools and set up devious plans to aid in failing our public schools.

Please vote NO on HB 2612. A yes vote will signal you don't believe in public education and don't value that all children in the state have a right to a good education and an accredited school.

Thank you,

Janell Conner
Olathe, KS

From: [Susette Schwartz](#)
To: [K12 Budget](#)
Subject: Vote No on HB 2612
Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024 3:29:39 PM

EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Vote NO on HB 2612. My grandson deserves to learn history as required by any college he wants to attend. Do not let Kansas be one of those states that does not want their children learning our history in it's entirety. Our children's educational opportunities will be diminished.

Thank you.

Susette M. Schwartz

Grandson in Wichita, Ks