

March 2, 2015

Honorable State Representatives:

My name is Amy Futhey and I am a school board member for USD 360, Caldwell. I have proudly served on this board for 16 years. I am testifying in opposition to SB 2345.

As I understand HB 2345, this bill is being written as a resolution to any conflict of interest issues that could exist for school board members. This bill would significantly reduce the ability for community members in any rural or urban community to be seated on a school board due to the limitation it sets for eligibility.

In any community, business leaders who provide service to the school would be disqualified for service on the school board due to a potential conflict of interest. In smaller communities, local businesses are the biggest supporters of the local school district due to their understanding of the economic importance of the school. In our district, potential conflicts are avoided by school board members who may have conflict excusing themselves from the discussion and vote. Local business owners work to build strong communities. If HB 2345 passes, our board will lose four honorable and hardworking board members who devote their time voluntarily to Kansas education.

Teachers and administrators who work in local school districts should not be able to serve on the local school board as State statute dictates. However, the current bill not only eliminates the ability to serve from teachers and administrators of the district, it eliminates good board candidates who may be related to a teacher in the district or worse, any teacher they may be related to in Kansas! This portion of the bill would cause our board to lose another honorable hardworking board member who devotes time to Kansas education because this community is his hometown.

As a school board member, I am elected by constituents in my district, just as members of the House and Senate are elected by their constituents. I am bound by state statutes and ethical standards that are the same as House and Senate members. I work in the private sector, just like most of the House and Senate members. I care about my community and the State of Kansas and work to make decisions that are in the best interest of those who are affected the most by those decisions, our students and our constituents. As a member of the House or Senate, I would say you do the same. The Legislature and school boards are both elected officials and work for the people of Kansas. This bill insinuates that school board members serve on local boards not as concerned citizens who care about education, but as greedy, self-serving individuals who serve only for personal gain. It seems discriminatory and unfair to place these limitations on one group of elected officials, while allowing another group who has the same potential for conflict of interest to continue in an elected position because they have the ability to pass the bill. That is definitely a conflict of interest.

I am proud of my 16 years of service to not only my community and our students, but the great State of Kansas. In my 16 years on this board, I am not aware of any instance where there was any action that could be considered a conflict of interest. The State of Kansas audits each district yearly to make sure school districts are following State statute. I believe this bill to be discriminatory and unfair to honorable Kansans who work for public education and Kansas communities.

I oppose HB 2345 and would ask that you would not pass this insulting and discriminatory bill.

Respectfully,

Amy L. Futhey
USD 360, Caldwell Board of Education