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**Written Opponent Testimony  
SB 496 – Establishing the parents’ bill of rights**

**Presented to the Senate Education Committee  
Wednesday, February 16, 2022**

**By  
Deena Horst and Ben Jones, Legislative Liaisons  
Kansas State Board of Education**

Chairwoman Baumgardner, Vice-Chairwoman Erickson, Ranking Minority Member Sykes and members of the Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for allowing our input on SB 496.

The Kansas State Board of Education strongly encourages parental involvement in their child's education. Studies show that parent engagement starting in early childhood equals a better educational outcome for the student. Teachers have dedicated their livelihoods to preparing and continually educating themselves to teach Kansas kids in both public and private schools. Public schools are governed by locally elected board members chosen by the members of the community to oversee the operations of Kansas schools. Most members are parents themselves. Teachers are also parents and members of the community in which they teach. As a local control state, each school reflects the values and expectations of their communities in all aspects of education, including choosing curriculum.

Parents/guardians have the right to attend and participate in local school board meetings. Additionally, parents are able and encouraged to engage with their school's staff and building administrators through in-person meetings and school hosted-events, as well as through written and electronic communications.

Remote learning created a need for digital copies of textbooks, learning materials, lesson plans, instructional videos, etc. to be placed on Google Classroom or similar portals. As a result, districts generally have continued to make those items available. If a community member is interested in viewing the textbooks and learning materials being used by their local

schools, access to hard copies of the items are made available. Access to online versions may be limited by copyright laws, therefore; some texts and materials may be not be available to the community-at-large in an online format, but only to those with secure passwords.

Transparency should be a focus of all school districts to ensure that parents/guardians can always be knowledgeable of the materials and textbooks to be used in daily lesson plans for their students. It is our belief that schools are already providing this type of transparency to inform parents. In fact, to our knowledge, the Legislature has never asked how each district operates in regard to communicating with parents. As mentioned in previous testimony, the State Board of Education and the Department of Education have offered to work with the Legislature to address education-related issues members of the Legislature have identified. We believe that the majority of your concerns identified in this bill can be addressed without imposing the statutory process. We urge you to consider amending this bill to provide for the formation of a stakeholder task force charged with developing recommendations for how districts can address the issues identified in this bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify regarding SB 496.