

February 2, 2023

Written Testimony for the House Committee on Education

Proponent testimony regarding House Bill 2139

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Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Kansas State High School Activities Association

Chairman Thomas and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide perspective in support of House Bill 2139

The Kansas State High School Activities Association and its 354-member senior high and 404-middle/junior high schools are proponents of House Bill 2139 and ask that you consider the following:

1. Annually, more than 3000 Kansans register with the KSHSAA to serve as officials for interscholastic activities. In recent years, the KSHSAA has experienced a reduction in the number of those willing to serve as game officials.
2. Compared to ten years ago, there are 1365 fewer registrations, which reflects a 22.7% reduction in the officiating pool. Some activities are more pronounced, especially those indoor activities whose fans are in close proximity to the officials. Notably, registered basketball officials have reduced by 656 officials (30.9%) and wrestling by 76 officials (26.1%).
3. The number one reason officials do not return to officiating is due to mistreatment by fans and coaches. HB 2139 sends the proper message to officials and to those stakeholders of school activities. We all know that safety of stakeholders is the first priority, but it is important to note that without officials, there will be no games.
4. The only concern maintained by the KSHSAA relative to this bill is in regards to the severity of the response in regards to the offense. Member schools do not want a lesser penalty for offenders as compared to what might be realized for under the existing Assault Statute. This might be accomplished by either increasing the penalty (specifically in Sent 1 (a) (1) and (3)), or by adding specific language that would make this a crime separate from the crimes of battery, assault, and/or criminal threat.

KSHSAA member school leaders believe in the teaching and learning opportunities afforded through school-based activities and support your effort to provide an additional level of protection for those hired to serve as event officials. This bill sends the proper message of support for those who adjudicate school events. Following a review of identified consequences, we urge you to support this bill by moving it to the next level of approval.