

SB 427**Proponent Testimony – in person****Senate education committee****March 13, 2024**

Hello, I am Amy Cawvey, a current school board member at Lansing USD 469. Speaking as an individual and not on behalf of the board, Senate Bill 427 has my full support.

Constituents deserve transparency from school board members. While our district displays email addresses on our website, I believe phone numbers should also be included. My own contact information is publicly shared on my social media pages for constituents to reach out to me at their convenience.

I fully support allowing individual board members to add items to the meeting agenda. Without this ability, our representation of constituents is constrained. Currently, the agenda is determined by the Board President and superintendent. The board president, holding a parliamentary position to preside over meetings, and the superintendent, as a non-elected official, dictate the agenda. Denying an individual board member the right to contribute agenda items restricts their ability to fully represent constituents. This limitation, witnessed firsthand by me, occurred when a board member's request for agenda items was not acknowledged or addressed by the sitting board president, Vice-President, and superintendent, hindering the board member's ability to fully represent their constituents. This centralizes power within the board president, limits other board members' representation of voters.

Additionally, I advocate for the authorization of payment for training from any non-profit source providing school board member training. Numerous training opportunities, both in-state and out, exist to enhance our education and service capabilities. While I have personally undertaken and funded some of these trainings out-of-pocket, I feel reimbursement by the district should be authorized. This financial support would enhance my ability to serve constituents. Given that school board members are unpaid, authorizing payment from the district for these out-of-pocket training expenses benefits both the school board member and, most importantly, the students.

Proud as I am of our students, staff, and district, our achievement scores, like those in other districts, have been declining. In math and ELA, the number of students below grade level has increased since 2015, and proficiency levels are lower. This negative trend necessitates transparency from board members and the ability to enact policies for crucial education changes. Senate Bill 427 supports this cause, empowering individual school board members to advocate for constituents and facilitating easy contact with board members who have sworn to serve.