

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