

Testimony before the

House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

on

HB 2521

by

Jerry Henn, Asst. Executive Director - USA-Kansas and Kansas School Superintendents Association

Testimony provided on behalf of USA-Kansas and Kansas School Superintendents Association

Madam Chair and members of the committee:

Our organizations stand in opposition to this bill as it is presented today.

Some points as to why we are opposed to this bill are, Kansas State Department of Education has a very good, regulated, alternative licensure program already in place. Second, this area needs to be regulated by the State Board of Education and KSDE, not the Kansas Legislature, and the teacher compact that was signed last session is just now in place.

KSDE's program to license teachers via their alternative program is very extensive and heavily regulated. They do require many of the same items listed here in this bill. The safe guards KSDE have in their policy aids our districts to make sure the people applying have met all the qualifications needed to teach our students in Kansas. Yes, these regulations may make it more rigorous, but this just ensures the ability to hire high quality teachers.

The State Board of Education is the governing body for education in Kansas. The Kansas Constitution had made this very clear. I understand the Legislature governs them, but I believe these types of decisions should come from there. They have approved the current status of licensure in Kansas. They have done an excellent job of keeping Kansas at the top of education systems in the U.S. By creating a law outside of their approval, it actually hurts education. Please do not create more laws for our educators to follow that are not needed.

Lastly, the Legislature passed the Education Compact to recruit teachers into Kansas. We have not even had a year to see if this is going to work. Currently there are 15 apprentices in the program. That means 15 new teachers for Kansas eventually. The 2024-2025 just opened the first week of February for applications. At time there is no one enrolled for the upcoming year. Enacting another law without data from the previous law is actually not responsible. One does not buy new tires just because they have been used for 5 months. We know we still have vacancies, but time is something we need to consider as we move forward.

In conclusion, the State Board of Education has a good grasp on licensure and it is the responsibility of the State Board to take care of licensure. Allow them to process the changes needed to license our teachers. Kansas already has a very good alternative licensure program on the books. It works well. Please leave it to the experts. Allow time for previous laws enacted to work.