

To: Members of the House Standing Committee on Federal and State Affairs

From: Lane Green, District Director of Athletics and Activities; Olathe Public Schools (USD 233)

RE: Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2197

I want to thank you for the opportunity to share the reasoning behind my opposition to House Bill 2197. As a matter of background, for the past eighteen years I have served as either a building or district-level athletic and activities director; currently in the Olathe Public Schools and formerly in the Shawnee Mission Public Schools; both located in the third congressional district and both members of the Sunflower League. As an aside, one of our most accomplished student-athletes when I served as the building athletic director at Shawnee Mission East High School is now a member of your committee.

Will Rogers is credited as saying: "Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there."

I clearly understand that many Kansans mistakenly believe the association is not moving forward with the times and is not in touch with the desires of the member schools and student athletes in which they serve. I can assure you that this very premise is wrong.

The Kansas State High School Activities Association is transparent, service-minded and accessible. The KSHSAA staff is dedicated to serving its member schools who; along with input from parents, student-athletes, the elected members of their local Boards of Education, school site councils and booster clubs, are truly the ones who develop the guidelines of the organization. This bears repeating. The Activities Association is not a benevolent dictatorship located on Southwest Commerce Place in Topeka. The Kansas State High School Activities Association is the approximately 760 member senior high and middle schools who serve their student-athletes in 29 sports and activities every year. All you will find at the KSHSAA headquarters are 20 individuals working tirelessly on behalf of the 102,000 student athletes all around the sunflower state and fully committed to the ideals of education-based athletics.

That is not to say that myself, the district I serve, or the member schools of the Sunflower League fully agree with every decision made by the KSHSAA membership. No more than every Kansan agrees with or understand the reasons behind every decision that comes out of the statehouse. Likewise, the KSHSAA member schools will rarely find full consensus. No more than the Kansas House would find full accord on many of the important issues you face. However, that does not mean that either body fails to strive to represent the very best interest of their constituents. In fact, we all know that this discourse and dialogue makes for a more dynamic and innovative institution and organization.

KSHSAA listens! Plain and simple. The governance structure of the Association is open to its membership and the public. I'm certain many will articulate today all the formal ways that KSHSAA is open to anyone who wants to have a voice. However, please also consider the thousands of informal, one-on-one discussions that take place annually between representatives of member schools and parents on KSHSAA-related issues.

I have found that people often confuse not realizing their desired outcomes for a lack of responsiveness by the state high school activities association. I believe the erroneous perceptions assigned to the activities association come from a disconnect between the central mission of school-based athletics and non-school sports programs such as club athletics or AAU sports. There is a place for all these programs and they all have value. However, in educational-athletics we are charged with the important task of

fielding competitive athletic and activity programs while balancing the academic expectations placed on our student-athletes.

Many Kansans do not understand that the diversity of our state results in tremendous challenges for our member-driven association. The KSHSAA includes member schools as large as 2,276 students and as small as 15 students. In my district alone, we serve student-athletes who come from high income households; middle class families, families on free and reduced lunch; and, sadly, a number of homeless students who represent our schools in athletics and activities. Our member schools come from urban and suburban districts where many schools are in close proximity to one another as well as rural areas where schools must travel significant distances for competition.

One must also remember that the overwhelming majority of students served by the association are those who simply take the lessons learned from athletics and activities with them to success in life outside of sports.

When one considers simply the diverse populations the KSHSAA serves, I believe the member schools of our state and the KSHSAA staff should be commended rather than have their organizational structure; which is already accessible to all; challenged by well-meaning individuals whose perceptions of the KSHSAA are simply wrong. Also, in many cases their desired organizational changes could have unintended consequences on the member schools and student-athletes these individuals' purports to serve.

If I were to go into any school or even this committee and propose a program that would guarantee the following results; increased achievement in the classroom, an increase in graduation rates, an increase in test scores, and would engage our students between the important and sometimes precarious hours of 3 and 6 p.m. Even better it would only cost the school just a small fraction of its overall budget; I believe most would take a keen interest in what I had to offer. Well, the program is already in place; school-based athletics and activities. Over and over again, research has shown that students who participate in school-based athletics achieve those results. This is our mission and as licensed, professional educators who keep their ears to the ground and have the best interest of our students at heart; we (as loving parents ourselves) are more than capable of making decisions that represent the very best interest of our student-athletes.

If the member schools have failed in one area, it is not doing a sufficient job in educating our important constituents that they do have a voice. I assure you that we, as educational leaders and member schools in our state activities association, listen each day to what our students, parents and communities are telling us. However, it should be up to professional educators who clearly understand the big picture and how the athletic and activity programs fit into the larger school community who make the final decisions with regards to educational athletics. For these reasons, I am opposed to House Bill 2197.