

House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee

Representative Jennings, Chair

H.B. 2243 – Authorizing school security officers to use certain types of emergency safety interventions.

February 6, 2017

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Andrew E. Koenigs and I am the Associate Superintendent for Human Resources for Emporia Public Schools. I am here to provide testimony in favor of House Bill 2243.

Emporia Public Schools currently employs 3 full-time armed school security guards to provide safety at our schools. Only a few school districts in the state employ their own security guards, Emporia being one of those school districts. Our board of education went through a lengthy process in 2013 to develop a job description and policies to allow our security guards to be armed to protect our students. All of our guards are required to have at least 3 years of experience in law enforcement and all of our guards are retired police officers from the Lyon County area. Additionally all of our officers are required to maintain 20 hours of training each year as a part of their position. All of our security guards have regular meetings with our local law enforcement and our Director of Safety and Security.

Our community and our local police departments (Emporia Police Department and Lyon County Sheriff's Office) have been very supportive of our efforts to provide additional safety and security measures for our students.

The Emporia Public Schools supports the new law related to Emergency Safety Intervention and appreciates the work that the Kansas State Board of Education and the 16-member committee did to develop this new law.

The law specifically exempted School Resource Officers and law enforcement officials from a portion of this new law and allows them to use mechanical restraint when the safety of a student or other students are in danger. We would like our school security guards to be afforded this same exemption. Their duties are identical to school resource officers – to keep our students safe in emergency situations.

Currently the way the law is written, if one of our guards is intervening in a violent student fight or would try to intervene with multiple school shooters, they could not use handcuffs to subdue a violent student. Our school security guards have expressed great concern about their ability to do their job with this new ESI restriction. They even have expressed concern for their own safety with the way the law is currently written. They feel they cannot properly protect our students without being able to use all of the resources available to them during a violent act.

We understand there are some who oppose any changes to this new law. But when there is an oversight that has been identified, it should be fixed and corrected. This clean-up bill seeks to correct this. Our security guards should be afforded the same abilities as a school resource officer regarding the use of mechanical restraint in our schools. Their duty is to protect our students and this bill seeks to fix this small omission.

Emporia has support from the Lyon County Sheriff's Office in support of this bill. I have that written letter of support if needed. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and hear our concerns.

Sincerely,

Andy Koenigs