

Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee

February 6, 2017

House Bill 2243

Good afternoon, I am Terri Moses the Executive Director of Safety Services for Wichita Public Schools. I have held this position for three and one half years. Prior to my employment with USD 259 I was employed by the City of Wichita Police Department. I retired from the WPD as a Deputy Chief of Police. I spent 33 years working as a Wichita police officer.

During my tenure, I worked extensively with the many schools that operate within the City of Wichita and also worked with many local providers of security. I spent several years creating and implementing training for private security officers.

When I moved from a commissioned police officer position to one that worked with non-commissioned security many assumed that I would want to make the officers working for USD 259 commissioned law enforcement officers. I knew from my experience working with commissioned officers, the school system and with security officers, this change was not necessary.

Security officers provide a valuable service to the Wichita Public School system. They interact daily with students and staff to ensure the safety of everyone (students, staff, and visitors). They work in both reactive and proactive modes. They react to situations that occur in schools that exceed the scope of a teacher's assignment. Resolving disputes, reporting incidents, building relationships and dealing with unexpected events are all routine duties for security officers.

When working with commissioned police officers, supervisors looked for statistics to determine effort. The number of cases, arrests, and tickets were important indicators of success. For security officers a effective day is one with no statistics, spending time building relationships and being that trusted adult for students to interact with is a successful day.

As we know from the media coverage of local and national events there are incidents where arrest and restraint are necessary. Handcuffs have been used by law enforcement and security for centuries to provide effective and safe restraint.

Last year when legislation was passed there was discussion about exempting commissioned law enforcement officers from the requirements. That exemption was included in the legislation. Security officers were not exempted. Our goal is to exempt security officers who are properly trained, as well.

Commissioned law enforcement officers in Kansas receive training on an extensive variety of topics. One reason security officers work well within a school setting is that they do not need this vast array of training. They do not need training of the operation of emergency vehicles, the use of firearms and many investigative situations. The State of Kansas does not specify what training law enforcement officers receive annually in the area of restraints. It is left to the individual agency to determine these training needs.

For the Wichita Public Schools, we mandate that our security officers receive annual training in the areas of restraint, including handcuffing, and non-violent crisis intervention. The restraint training is provided by either members of the Wichita Police Department or the Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office.

Your Committee is also tasked with reviewing SB 367. One of the goals of SB 367 is to reduce referrals of students in schools to law enforcement. An unanticipated outcome of the Emergency Safety Interventions legislation is an increase in referrals. Because USD 259 security officers cannot currently use restraints, we are forced to call 911 and ask for law enforcement assistance. An incident that could possibly be handled by a security officer using restraints until a student can de-escalate may now be cause for a call to 911.

The Wichita Public School system has worked for years to reduce the incidents where students are referred to law enforcement. We currently have two Memorandums of Understanding with various entities in Wichita. They are both designed to reduce the incidents of arrest of USD 259 students. These MOUs have been in operation for over 5 years.

We are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all, students, staff, and visitors. Allowing our trained security officers to use restraints allows us to do this.

We are requesting that you support the proposed HB 2243.

Sincerely,

Terri S. Moses
Executive Director of Safety Services
Wichita Public Schools