



**KANSAS ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

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Oral opponent testimony before the

House Committee on K-12 Education Budget

on

HB 2150 – Enacting the Kansas hope scholarship act

by

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Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify as an opponent of **HB 2150**, establishing the Kansas hope scholarship act.

KASB condemns bullying in every form and at every level of society. It's unacceptable and causes lasting harm. We must all do better to protect our students.

That being said, we respectfully suggest that HB 2150 will not solve the problem of bullying in schools, if that is its intent. As we read the legislation, the bill allows *any* student who reports an alleged incident of bullying to transfer with a voucher to another public school or a private school. The bill does not specifically protect an actual *victim* of bullying, nor does it prevent the the alleged *bully* from taking the voucher and transferring to another school. Additionally, while the bill requires an investigation of alleged incidents, it does not tie the results of that investigation back to its enforcement mechanism. So even if the alleged incident is determined *not* to have occurred, a student could still take the voucher and transfer to another school. Taken to an extreme, the bill could result in a raft of alleged witnesses leaving a school, with only the bullies remaining behind in a climate not conducive to learning. That is not a policy goal we are willing to promote.

Furthermore, school districts already have complaint procedures in place that will likely be contradicted by the timelines set forth in HB 2150 as introduced. The resulting confusion will do no service to the students this bill seems intended to serve.

There sadly is no way to guarantee through this bill or any other measure that bullying does not or will not take place in the school that receives the transferring student. While all Kansas schools must take responsibility for their school climates, bullying behavior is pervasive throughout our society and its solution lies far beyond the mere transfer of a student and his or her associated resources from one school

to another. It will require sustained, concentrated effort involving parents, the schools and law enforcement.

We also note that many school children in the sparsely populated areas of the state are geographically unable to move to another school. This disequalizing effect would seem to open the legislation to an immediate legal challenge.

Finally, the private schools referred to in HB 2150 are not *required* to accept witnesses to or victims of bullying who may wish to transfer under the auspices of this legislation. In fact, we suggest that many voucher-bearing students who are bullied for certain traits or behaviors could well be *rejected* by private schools who — in contrast to public schools — are not required to accept all students who present themselves at the schoolhouse door. We categorically oppose giving public funds to private schools that are not held to the same accountability standards as public ones.

For these reasons, KASB stands in opposition to HB 2150. I am happy to take questions at the appropriate time.