



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2662

**Kansas House of Representatives
House Committee on K-12 Education Budget**

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Sam Adolphsen
Visiting Fellow
Opportunity Solutions Project

Chair Williams, Vice-Chair Hoffman and members of the committee,

My name is Sam Adolphsen, and I am a visiting fellow at the Opportunity Solutions Project, or OSP. OSP is a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization dedicated to advancing policies that reduce barriers to work, protect state benefits for the truly needy, and ensure that government is accountable to taxpayers and citizens.

We offer this testimony in support of House Bill 2662 because it improves accountability and transparency, and because it protects students and staff from receiving—and taxpayers from funding—divisive teaching or training.

First, this is a strong bill because it takes an important step toward ensuring that government is accountable to the taxpayers that fund it and the individuals who are utilizing government services— in this case, public schools. This is critical because elementary and secondary spending in Kansas represents more than 25 percent of all expenditures, and billions in property taxes go toward public education.¹⁻²

As an organization focused on government accountability, we have significant experience with finding and researching government information and data. Often, it requires an extensive Freedom of Information (FOIA) request process to obtain simple documentation. That should not be the case. All government should operate in the clear light of day, so citizens and taxpayers know what is going on and how effectively—or ineffectively—their tax dollars are being used.

This is true when it comes to government spending, and it is certainly true when it comes to what students are learning in school. Parents have a strong interest in knowing exactly what their kids are being taught, and taxpayers have a strong interest in knowing exactly how their tax dollars are being spent. The transparency provisions in House Bill 2662 accomplish both. The bill will ensure that public schools are transparent in their approach to education. This provides greater accountability to the people they serve, which is just basic good government. Along with the great transparency provisions, it also ensures that parents have the right to use that information and act to direct their child's educational future as they deem appropriate.

Second, the bill makes sure that these significant taxpayer dollars are going toward their intended purpose: Teaching kids what they need to know to advance in their education and into adulthood. The bill provides basic guardrails against teaching that would be divisive or activities that are overtly political and compel someone to affirm or believe something divisive.

It includes important provisions to make sure that private funding is not used to promote or push a certain ideology within the classroom. We have seen this in other areas of government, such as when Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg used hundreds of millions in private funding to influence local elections. Keeping funding in the public eye and making sure it is going toward its intended purpose is important to keep public education accountable to parents and the taxpayers who fund it.

Finally, this bill is helpful to the school system as well in the long term, because they can ensure everyone is on the same page by having all relevant curriculum information located in one place

where students, parents, and members of the public can be directed to view and review the materials. And as transparency increases across the board, it will also help restore faith in what is being taught in schools, creating a stronger community effort around educating the next generation.

This makes House Bill 2662 a win-win—more transparency and more trust—for parents and taxpayers alike. For these reasons, we are pleased to support this bill.

Thank you for your time.

Sam Adolphsen
Visiting Fellow
Opportunity Solutions Project (OSP)

¹ NASBO, "2019-2021 State Expenditures Report," National Association of State Budget Officers (2022), https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NASBO/9d2d2db1-c943-4f1b-b750-0fca152d64c2/UploadedImages/SER%20Archive/2021_State_Expenditure_Report_S.pdf.

² Dave Trabert, "5 things you need to know about property taxes in Kansas," Kansas Policy Institute (2020), <https://kansaspolicy.org/honestygap/>.