

February 15, 2022

Chairwoman Kristey Williams and Committee Members
Room 546-S, State Capital
Topeka, KS 66612

RE: HB2662 Parent Bill of Rights

Dear Representative Williams and Committee Members,

As a former classroom teacher and someone who has worked and volunteered in education in Salina, Kansas for over 35 years, I am writing in opposition to HB2662, also referred to as the Parent Bill of Rights. I find this bill to be both unnecessary and unmanageable and I believe that its passage and implementation will cause great harm to public education.

First, I find many of the provisions of this bill to be unnecessary. Referring to New Section 1 of the bill as introduced, most of the parental rights listed are already provided. Information about what lessons are being taught and what resources are being used are more accessible than ever with many districts requiring teachers to post lessons on digital platforms that are fully accessible to parents. Where this isn't the case, parents have access to these materials through a simple request to the teacher. In my experience as a classroom teacher, very few parents take advantage of the opportunities that are available to them to learn more about what happens in their child(ren)'s classroom. Most teachers are happy to have a parent show interest. Therefore the portion of the bill as specifically described in New Sec. 2 requiring the development and maintenance of a parent transparency portal is a solution for a problem that doesn't exist.

In addition, this requirement will necessitate teachers spending vast quantities of time to collect and enter the information required for the transparency portal. Having been in education for so many years, I have observed as more and more tasks are added to a teachers already overflowing plate. Teachers are truly overwhelmed and overworked and this bill adds an onerous amount of work to that overflowing plate. I believe if this bill is passed there will be a large number of teachers leaving the profession as a result.

One of the most harmful aspects of this bill is that it implies a deep mistrust of teachers and what they do in the classroom. It implies that teachers must have an agenda they are trying to push onto their students. I find this to be very insulting and not true of the vast majority of teachers. Teachers are professionals who have studied and trained in effective teaching strategies and more and more they are being micromanaged in a way not seen in other professions. This distrust of the profession in general is already having disastrous impacts as teachers are retiring and/or leaving the profession early.

The other issue I have with this bill is the parent transparency portal is unmanageable. The vast quantity of information that would be posted even on a small district's website is staggering. As a classroom teacher it was not unusual for me to use multiple print, digital, audio and self-created resources during one lesson. I might provide 5-10 websites we would visit for examples, a textbook, self-created Power-Point presentations and worksheets, lab handouts, instruction sheets and other learning materials. It would not be unusual for me to use over 20 different resources in one lesson. Assuming one lesson each day of class (let's use 150 class days, which is low, but accounts for testing days and other interruptions in the schedule) that could be 3000 items for one course. Then multiply that by the 3 different courses I usually taught each day and we're talking 9000 items for one teacher. Many of the teachers I work with in small, rural districts in northwest and north central Kansas often teach 7 different courses. The sheer volume of entries in a transparency portal make it unmanageable and very difficult to maintain. Who will be responsible for this and who will determine whether the portals are accurate and up-to-date? I maintain that all of the time that would go into developing and maintaining a portal by teachers, administrators and other staff, could be much better used working directly with students to meet their learning needs!

Thank you for investment in education through your service on the House Committee on K-12 Education and for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you regarding HB2662.

Sincerely,

Pam Kraus
2664 Allen
Salina, KS 67401
pamkraus77@gmail.com