



Senate Education Committee
Feb. 16, 2022
SB 496

Madam Chair and members of the Committee,

My name is Elizabeth Patton and I am the state director of Americans for Prosperity—Kansas. On behalf of the thousands of activists across our state, we urge you to support Senate Bill 496, which would provide a call for increased transparency and accountability in our state. In short, if schools truly want what is best for students and have nothing to hide with what is being taught and how it is being taught, there should be unanimous support for curriculum and professional development transparency for institutions using taxpayer funding.

This bill sets up a simple and basic framework for recognizing the rights of parents to play a key role in their child’s education. The bill is self-explanatory if not self-evident.

The language of the bill is simple and straightforward. It is difficult to articulate any rational reason why these materials should not be available for review. That is a basic and accepted requirement for government accountability and transparency. When it comes to children, frankly, the government ought to be extra-diligent. Knowledge of what is being taught and, more importantly, how it is being taught is critical for parents to be able to make informed decisions about their children’s educations and for lawmakers to make informed decisions about education policy.

Curriculum transparency and parental involvement are key ingredients in the current ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act). Schools must provide parents with curriculum information and explanations of curriculum and forms of assessments used to measure student progress.¹ I think we can all agree that robust parental engagement should never be deemed an act of “domestic terrorism”, as some have suggested.²

In a poll of teachers, conducted by EdWeek Research Center last November, a clear majority of teachers polled agreed that parents should be somewhat to very involved in selecting curriculum and materials selection in their districts, but only 31% said parents were involved in fact. A

¹https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/ESSA%20Parent%20and%20Family%20Engagement%20Requirements%20PowerPoint.pdf

² <https://sentinelksmo.org/kasb-wont-say-if-they-will-leave-national-school-boards-association/>

majority, 54% were in favor of allowing parents to opt their children out of classes, curricula or units they disapprove of.³

When parents are deciding what is best for their individual students, information is a key component to an individualized education. The recent pandemic has highlighted the limitations of this approach and today more than ever parents are demanding more individualize solutions that put students, not systems, at the center.

Families and their children deserve a more individualized, flexible approach to learning, one that exposes students to a wide variety of educational opportunities. This is because each child is different, and all children deserve a menu of options—programs, services, courses, and schools that are designed to address their unique interests and aptitudes. They need to know what is available and how to move forward.

The goal of our education system should not be that of standardizing children. It should be to allow every student to discover, develop, and apply their talents to realize their full potential and maximize their capacity to contribute to society. One way of reaching this goal is to ensure we recognize learning wherever it occurs.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Patton

Kansas State Director
Americans for Prosperity—Kansas

³ <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/majority-of-educators-believe-parents-should-be-involved-in-curriculum-choices/2021/12>