

Hello, my name is Megan Harper, I currently have a child in the USD 305 school district in Salina Kansas. I would first like to say Thank you for taking the time to listen and engage in questions with parents before you make decisions on the upcoming SB541 bill.

I have been working with a group of parents in Salina since August 2021, shortly after the USD 305 School Board made the decision to mandate masking for our children in special session. I have never been involved in politics or our Board of Education prior to this. I have since attended all the Board of Education meetings since August except one, which I watched online after the fact. I have no knowledge of how a school board meeting operates but I see now that it isn't designed to include parental choice or opinion. At my first BOE meeting, speakers were allowed 3 minutes to address the board if the subject was not an "action item". At the last meeting, they allowed 60 seconds. When you address the board at the meetings, they do not respond or engage in any communication; it is a way one street. I have sent many e-mails to our BOE regarding masking, quarantining, and health policies since August with minimal response.

I have also found that our school board and district do things in secrete. At the December 2021 BOE meeting when Superintendent Linn Exline was discussing the mask mandate, she referenced a "medical advisory" group. This was the first time the "medical advisory" group had been mentioned. I e-mailed Mrs. Exline to find out more about this "medical advisory" group and who was on it and her response was:

*"The medical advisory group is simply a name that I used to refer to some local physicians who I call on from time to time to help me understand the current guidance coming from KDHE and the CDC. These are not members of a group formally convened by or appointed by the board. They are simply resources for me and my own understanding. If I need to research or get advice related to COVID I will use them as a point of information. This group does not make decisions of any kind for the Board or the District."*

This is not true; they have met multiple times. They keep attendance records and meeting minutes. The meetings have included Mrs. Linn Exline the Superintendent, Board of Education members and medical professionals from Salina. Our school district did not notify parents that this advisory group was being formed, they did not tell anyone that they were taking guidance from them, they did not ask or allow any parent participation, and when they were asked about this "medical advisory" group, they lied.

Our children have lost so much in the last 2 years. They have been forced to school from home, missed out on social and emotional development, and suffered through 7 hours a day wearing dirty masks while adults carried on their daily lives without them. The USD 305 Board of Education along with all other school districts in Kansas have been allowed this overreach because of the way our laws are written. We must change these laws to rein in their power and allow for parental involvement.

Our children deserve better.

Thank you again for taking the time to listen.

Sincerely,

Megan Harper

