

To: Kansas House Standing Committee on Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development

From: Harry McDonald representing MainStream Coalition

Subject: HB 2027

Date: March 6, 2013

Mainstream Coalition holds that HB 2027 is not in the best interests of the children of Kansas.

Children need quality teachers. Numerous studies have shown that 30-50% of new teachers leave within their first five years of teaching. Research also has shown that teachers make their greatest gains in teaching effectiveness in these same first five years. Consider also studies on why so many teachers leave so early in their careers. Reasons found often in the top five included poor working conditions and lack of support.

So here we have HB 2027, written without teacher input, which strips teachers of what little say they currently have to improve working conditions. Little remains of the currently negotiable items either mandatorily negotiable or permissibly so.

HB 2027 thus creates the likelihood of increased teacher dissatisfaction with working conditions and is likely to accelerate the exodus of early career teachers with the result of decreased learning by our students. Students paired endlessly with early-career teachers will make predictably lower progress than if teachers stay five years or more. Districts are fighting now to stop the drain on our schools from the already high turnover rate of professional staff. With all the stresses that are found in public education today, we don't need to create additional ones for our teachers. Research says our students will suffer.

Student success has also been shown to excel in districts with good employment relations. Conversely, student outcomes suffer when employment relations are poor. Providing teachers with input into their working conditions is an important part of good employment relations. This legislation creates an atmosphere where teacher input into many aspects of their working conditions is prohibited. Teacher attitudinal and actual labor unrest are more likely to occur under this scenario with predictably lower student performance.

Since teachers were not consulted in the development of this legislation while board and administrator organizations were, it appears that the intention of the legislation is anti-teacher. Surely this is not in the best interests of our students. Student productivity should trump administrative convenience always. It is unclear in this legislation that student productivity will benefit from these changes.

If this is not actually the case, let these changes develop in the open. If there is a perceived need for reform in our professional negotiations statute, let us do this systematically, in the open, with all parties present. Let these changes develop in the light and not in the darkness of haste.

House Commerce & Economic
Development Committee

Date: _____
Attachment #: 8

Let us not rush through legislation with only a few stake-holders providing input. Keep in mind that although KASB and USA provided input, all of their constituents do not agree. Consider that the Lawrence and Emporia school boards have passed resolutions opposing these changes. Administrators from Topeka, Geary County, Kansas City, Buhler, and Shawnee Heights have written and spoken in opposition.

If the general tenor of this legislation isn't bad enough, there is one provision which I doubt seriously is legal. HB 2027 declares void and unenforceable all aspects of existing contracts except those newly defined as mandatorily negotiable. Though I am not a lawyer, I found no justification for breaking a contract described as legislative prerogative.

Since this committee has already passed this bill and is only now hearing testimony, I urge the committee to move reconsideration of HB 2027. To do otherwise is to make a shame of the hearing process. I don't believe any of those testifying today journeyed here without the expectation that their testimony would be heard and considered.