



**KANSAS ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

Serving Educational Leaders, Inspiring Student Success

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Oral proponent testimony on

HB 2257 - Requirements for school district bullying policies; investigation of complaints.

in

House K-12 Education Budget by

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Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in favor of **HB 2257**, requirements for school district bullying policies; investigation of complaints. I should clarify that in spite of our conceptual support of the bill, we have some significant concerns as well.

In spite of school districts' — and the legislature's — best efforts to prevent bullying and protect victims, it's clear that many parents, students and community members feel not enough is being done. If bullying is to be solved, it will take a concerted, joint effort by parents, the schools and law enforcement. We must all do better to address the scourge of bullying and that's why we appear in qualified support of the bill today. We would like to work with the bill sponsors, the committee, the legislature and the State Board of Education to craft a response that will protect students from bullying while respecting local board control and the constitutional role of the State Board of Education.

We appreciate that HB 2257 calls for the State Board to develop standards that will serve as best practices and believe the Board will be adept at bringing various stakeholders together.

Our concerns with the bill center on where it creates potential conflicts with current law and procedures:

-The requirement to share names of alleged bullies and the consequences of their actions is likely a violation of student privacy law (FERPA);

-Requiring specific investigation procedures and an independent appeal process that would not align with existing local complaint policies could cause confusion and gridlock that will ill-serve victims;

-Requiring all reports to be investigated equally (including anonymous complaints that are impossible to corroborate) even if they are false or do not involve bullying, will consume already scarce staff time and resources.

Sadly, in the years since the 2007 enactment of existing school bully-prevention law, forces at work in our overall society have made bullying increasingly difficult for schools to fight alone. We see bullying at

every level of society, from youth sports to reality TV to the coarsening of discourse in local, state and national politics.

We suggest the legislature use this bill as an opportunity to have a conversation about how adults in Kansas can work together to better serve our children. While schools have an important role to play, they cannot unilaterally solve bullying. Parents, community members and local, state and national officials must work together to model mutual respect, responsibility and maturity. KASB stands ready to assist in that effort.

Thank you, and I will be happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.