

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE COMMERCE AND LABOR COMMITTEE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Donald Dahl at 9:00 a.m. on February 4, 2003 in Room 521-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Committee staff present: Jerry Ann Donaldson, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Renae Jefferies, Revisor of Statutes
June Evans, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Representative Dale Swenson
Mark Desetti, Kansas National Education Association
Zoe Thompson, Program Coordinator, Kansas Families and Schools Together
Wayne Maichel, Executive Vice President, Kansas AFL-CIO
Keaton Kelso, State Director, Communities in Schools of Kansas
Hal Hudson, State Director, National Federation of Independent Business
Terry Leatherman, Vice President, KS Chamber of Commerce

Others attending: See attached sheet

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and asked if there were any bill introductions.

The Chairman opened the hearing on **HB 2022: Labor and employment, school conference and activity leave.**

Staff gave a briefing on **HB 2022**, stating the key to the enhancement of the Kansas public education system can come from active participation of a parent in the education of such parent's child by attending school conferences and related activities.

Representative Dale Swenson testified as a proponent to **HB 2022**. Under the provisions of this bill an employee would have the benefit of unpaid leave or the use of vacation time if available to the employee. The employee utilizing this benefit would not be subject to disciplinary action for the time missed from work provided that the employee make a reasonable effort to notify the employer so as not to unduly disrupt the employer's operation. Parents need to know they can take this responsibility for their children's education, without having a fear of retaliation from their employers for doing so (See Attachment 1).

Mark Desetti, Kansas National Education Association, testified in support of **HB 2022**. The bill requires employers to provide unpaid leave time for parents to participate in their child's education. It also requires that parents be allowed to substitute accrued paid leave time for this purpose. Mr. Desetti stated that there's

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no excuse for parents skipping that parent-teacher conference or missing that child's spring recital, etc. (See Attachment 2).

Zoe Thompson, Program Coordinator, Kansas Families and Schools Together, Inc. (KFAST), testified as a proponent to **HB 2022**. One of the goals of KFAST is to find out how businesses support parents and quality education practices. **HB 2022** strikes a balance in helping build a partnership between parents, schools and the community. In an effort to strengthen schools KFAST is working to develop better communication and collaboration between schools, parents, businesses and the community. She viewed parent involvement as one key element in helping to achieve those goals (See Attachment 3).

Wayne Maichel, Executive Vice-President of the Kansas AFL-CIO, testified he represented the active interest of their 95,000 members who were in support of **HB 2022**. This bill would require employers to allow every employee leave from work to participate in conferences or classroom activities related to the employee's dependent children.

Continuity is needed in employers allowing employees time off to attend children's school activities (See Attachment 4).

Keaton Kelso, State Director, Communities in Schools of Kansas, a proponent, testified in support of **HB 2022**. The simple idea of providing support for working families to become more involved in the lives of their children is essential for the development of successful young citizens. Partnership among all sectors of the community, including employers, parents and schools is required to ensure success of our children (See Attachment 5).

Hal Hudson, State Director, National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), testified as an opponent to **HB 2022**. NFIB membership includes over 6,000 small and independent businesses across the state. The majority of our members have 15 or fewer employees, while collectively they employ over 57,000 Kansans, and have aggregate sales of over \$6 billion. Small business owners already are overburdened with regulations and red tape, and do not want anymore mandates from state or federal government. It is felt this is unnecessary and unwarranted legislation (See Attachment 6).

Terry Leatherman, Vice President, KCCI, Legislative Affairs, testified as an opponent to **HB 2022**. While opposed to this bill, KCCI strongly supports the intention of the legislation. The Kansas Chamber encourages its members to permit employees to participate in parent-teacher conferences and school activities that are enhanced by parental involvement. However, **HB 2022** establishes a government mandate requiring that businesses to provide this employee benefit of leave time to attend school activities.

The bill applies to all businesses, big and small, retail shops and manufacturing factories, and business in small towns and big cities. Applying the same blanket rule to all businesses fails to recognize particular problems this legislation might pose to a particular business. This bill shows a lack of faith toward Kansas employers; many employers work with their employees to let them off for school functions and government intervention is not needed (See Attachment 7).

The Chairman closed the hearing on **HB 2022**.

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The meeting adjourned at 10:25. The Chairman announced the next meeting would be February 5 in Room 243-N.