



Oral, Proponent Testimony before the

**House Committee on Appropriations**

on

**HB 2773 – Creating the Kansas safe and secure schools act**

by

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Also representing United School Administrators of Kansas**

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **HB 2773**. I am speaking on behalf of both KASB and the United School Administrators. We applaud the intent of this bill to improve school safety and security. We want to assure this committee that school districts have been working to do everything the bill proposes. We do not need a state law to require that local school boards be concerned about the safety of children in their community. What the state can do is provide assistance, guidance and resources. In general, we support this bill because it provides those three things.

However, there are several areas of the bill where we suggest some additional consideration or clarification would be helpful.

The bill contains the following provisions:

**Section 1** – Appropriations for expanded State Department of Education staff support and \$5 million for grants to school districts.

**Section 2** – Title.

**Section 3** – Requires the State Board of Education to develop statewide standards for making all public schools and attendance centers operated by school districts in this state safe and secure and directs the board to consult with other state agencies.

- We believe the State Board should also consult with local school districts and other appropriate local agencies, such as law enforcement, in the development of these standards. Frankly, we are confident the State Board will do so, but suggest this could be included in the bill.

**Section 4** – Requires the State Boards to develop and adopt statewide standards for school safety and security plans to be adopted by each school district.

- Once again, the bill specifies the board is to consult with state agencies. We suggest there is wisdom outside of state government, and such standards should be developed with input from those most directly concerned. We further believe that Kansans have always recognized that one size does not fit all when considering the diverse circumstances and needs of Kansas communities, which is why the Kansas Constitution requires that local schools be “maintained, developed and operated by local elected boards” rather than by state agencies.

**Section 5** – Directs the board of education of each school district shall adopt a comprehensive school safety and security plan based on the statewide standards adopted by the state board of education under sections 3 and 4.

- Although KASB is always concerned about the impact of new state mandates, we frankly believe safety is part of a minimum standard required of each state and district, and that most local boards already have such plans. This bill would provide each board the opportunity to evaluate their plans against state standards.

**Section 6** – Provide that local districts may apply for funding for school safety and security improvements as determined based on the standards adopted by the state board under sections 3 and 4.

- The only issue we would note here is that sections 3 and 4 seem primarily concerned with physical safety and security of buildings. We believe some school leaders would suggest that the most serious threats come from emotionally disturbed students and families in crisis. We would note that many school districts have been able to raise more resources address the needs of their physical plant through bond issues and capital outlay funds than through general operating funds. As a result, the committee may wish to consider what flexibility districts and the State Board would have in using these funds.

**Section 7** – Concerns firearm safety instruction. First, it authorizes school boards to adopt firearm safety programs. Second, it directs the State Board to adopt “curriculum guidelines for a standardized firearm safety education program” based on the Eddie the Eagle program and the Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Hunter Safety Program, “or any other evidence-based program.”

Third, it says that if a district adopts such a program, it “shall be in accordance with the guidelines established by the state board of education.” Fourth, it requires that such instruction “shall be offered so as to ensure that all students are provided the opportunity to take the course.”

- KASB raised concerns about the original firearms safety instruction bill and appreciates efforts to address those concerns; however, this provision is troubling. Although it gives the State Board of Education flexibility to use either the Eddie the Eagle and state hunter safety program or other “evidence-based programs,” it appears that local districts would have to use the whatever the State Board selects.
- KASB does not believe that the state should dictate any specific curriculum requirement in any area. To the best of our knowledge, the state has never done so. For example, the Legislature in KSA 72-5170 (b) says “The state board shall establish curriculum standards that reflect high academic standards for the core academic areas of mathematics, science, reading, writing and social studies.” The law goes on to say, however: “Nothing in this subsection shall be construed in any manner so as to impinge upon any school district’s authority to determine its own curriculum.” The reason for this is not simply “local control,” but to also allow local schools to experiment with different approaches to teaching and learning, different curriculum and materials, and different ways to organize instruction.
- Furthermore, we are unclear as to the meaning of requiring that such instruction be provided so all students “have the opportunity to take the course.” Would this preclude offering such programs as an elective? Does it mean that it could only be offered to all students in all grades? It appears this language is unnecessarily restrictive and could result in fewer districts offering such programs.
- We suggest the simple solution would be to remove lines 20-23 on page 5 of the bill.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns.