



Kansas PTA
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February 15, 2022

REMOTE Testimony to Senate Education Committee

Honorable Chair, Senator Molly Baumgardner

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Room 445-S, State Capitol Building

Neutral, with significant reservations [Senate Bill 496](#) – Parents Rights and Transparency

Hearing: Wednesday, February 16, 2022, 1:30 PM Room 144-S

Madame Chair and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide remote testimony on [SB 496](#) parents’ rights and transparency bill. A primary mission of the PTA is to support parent engagement in education.

PTA Mission and Values. The mission of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is to make every child’s potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. Initiatives of the PTA are aligned with this mission and guided by five core values: collaboration, commitment, diversity, respect and accountability.

However, Kansas PTA cannot support the overall bill as written, in part because we need more clarity on the specifics and intent of these stated rights in relation to K-12 education. Our questions are presented in order of the bill’s components and aligned with the [Kansas PTA legislative platform](#):

SB 496	Questions or Concerns – in relation to K-12 education
(1) The right to direct the education and care of such child.	If this means Kansas parents can choose to enroll their school-aged child in the public or private school systems or to home school, we understand this to be current law. We support existing law.
2) the right to direct the upbringing and the moral or religious training of such child.	In relation to education, if this means that Kansas parents who object to the state and national education standards can choose to enroll their children in non-public schools, we understand this to be current law. We support existing law.

SB 496	Questions or Concerns (continued)
<p>(3) the right to request, access and inspect all written and electronic records maintained by a school relating to such child; (4) the right to be informed of and inspect the curriculum, instructional materials and any other materials that are made available or taught to such child in the child's school</p>	<p>If this means that Kansas parents have online access, and/or hard copy access, to their children’s assignments, district curriculum, grades, K-12 course of study, graduation requirements, attendance, and other personal records, we understand these procedures to be current practice. Public school parents can access online and/or engage directly with teachers and principals. Please note that all the invited conferees to a house education committee on this topic testified that they had no problems accessing their children’s instructional materials <i>“I believe BV does an excellent job with curriculum transparency... I can go on the website and see what the curriculum is, they list the novels... if a parent has an objection to a novel, that can be brought up to the school.. I feel informed”</i> https://youtu.be/V7ClwTUBiAY?t=4626</p>
<p>(5) the right to attend publicly designated meetings of the local school board and the right to question and address school officials during designated public comment periods or through letters, electronic communications or in-person meetings</p>	<p>If this means local school boards must comply with the Kansas Open Meetings Acts, we understand these policies and procedures to be current practice. We support existing law. However, the decision to allow public comment is currently at the discretion of local school boards. If this bill intends to mandate public comment, a separate bill and its own hearing is warranted. Public comment is one of several ways that parents and patrons can inform school leadership of their questions, concerns and support. Kansas PTA supports the provision of multiple communication channels. But PTA also supports the rights of local volunteer school board members to be addressed in a reasonable, respectful and safe manner, and to engage in the business of the district and oversight of state funds.</p>
<p>(6) the right to make healthcare and medical decisions for such child, including the right to make decisions regarding vaccinations and immunizations</p>	<p>If this means that Kansas parents have the right to make decisions regarding vaccinations of their children, we understand this to be current law. We also recognize that Kansas law requires students enrolled in public schools to be vaccinated against communicable diseases. Kansas PTA supports a safe learning environment for all students and staff, which includes this longstanding state law.</p>
<p>(7) the right to expect that such child... shall not be compelled to ...; (8) to expect no course of instruction...; (9).. shall not contract for teacher professional development .. held to violate the civil rights act of 1964.</p>	<p>If this means the operations of public schools must be in compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, we understand this to be current expectations of state standards, state accreditation, local education standards and curriculum, and of local human resource departments. We support existing law. Kansas PTA supports teacher mentoring and PD to build capacity of educators in their work to understand compliance requirements and to create opportunities for all student to be college and career ready.</p>

<p>(10) the right to expect that each teacher and educator of such child will endeavor to present facts without distortion, bias or personal prejudice; (11) the right to expect that each .. educator of such child shall work to eliminate coercion that forces teachers and educators to support actions and ideologies that violate individual professional integrity</p>	<p>While these two statements could be held up to any professional or any elected official, a great deal more clarity would be required in order to understand how such rights would be translated into law or deemed appropriate for statute. Most organizations and businesses relegate this level of oversight to management and supervision. Kansas PTA values the expertise of educators, their commitment to continuous improvement to provide quality educational experience for all students, and the ongoing cycle of evaluation and improvement through the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation at the state level and building improvement plans at the local level.</p>
<p>(12) the right to assert any other inalienable or constitutional right that is reserved to the parent and the child pursuant to state or federal law</p>	<p>This right is unclear in relation to the day to day operations of a school and how the actions of one parent to assert any right impacts the rights of all other parents in that school or district?</p>
<p>(d) The board of education .. shall adopt policies to guarantee a parent's right to be involved in a child's education. Such policies shall be developed in consultation with parents, teachers and administrators... and shall include: (1) to (4).</p>	<p>If this means that Kansas public schools are expected to have clearly stated policies and procedures for parents to: access information about the school curriculum, rights to review student records, to file complaints or objections over library books or instructional resources, then we understand this to be current practice. This new language regarding (1) to (4), however, appears primarily to pull teachers away from students and their efforts to facilitate learning recovery, for a level of time-consuming and excessive documentation that could be otherwise clarified through existing procedures and standard parent involvement practices (e.g., contacting the teacher).</p>

Thank you for your time and consideration. We urge you to vote NO on SB 496 without the identified concerns being addressed in the bill's current form.

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THE PTA POSITION

Kansas PTA is a nonpartisan association that promotes the welfare of children and youth. The PTA does not endorse any candidate or political party. Rather, we advocate for policies and legislation that affect Kansas youth in alignment with our legislative platform and priorities. [PTA mission and purpose](#) have remained the same since our inception over 100 years ago, focused on facilitating every child's potential and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.