

**HB 2382 Proponent Testimony – in person  
House K-12 Budget Committee  
Ward Cassidy, Executive Director  
February 20, 2023**



Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am here to support HB 2382 – the School Board Member Free Speech and Transparency Act.

I have been the Executive Director for the Kansas School Board Resource Center since it's inception this past December. Since that time I have spoken directly to or been contacted by many current school board members and concerned parents about the declining state of Kansas Education.

Not one board member has indicated that they would like anything other than full transparency of their districts Board Meetings. Many of them feel stymied by the system put in place and would like to better represent the constituents that voted for them.

The thought that board member emails are not readily available to people of their district is simply hard to believe. There are districts that refuse to post board member emails or they filter them through their district servers and are not always sent on. If board members cannot be contacted it is impossible to be aware of parent concerns. HB 2382 would allow all board members to be contacted by legitimate email.

The number one complaint I hear is the board members inability to have agenda items placed on the agenda without permission from the board president or permission granted by a majority of the board. Putting an agenda item on the board docket the day of or at the start of a meeting is not allowed in most districts. If a board member has a concern voiced by his constituents waiting a month until the next board meeting just doesn't make sense.

Another complaint I have heard is that board members need to be allowed to react to comments made in open forum other than asking clarifying questions. Having a session where there are public comments should be on every agenda and board members should be able to respond.

Here are just a few concerns I have heard directly from school board members in Kansas.

1. I have requested information about the number of Individual Education Plans in our district and cannot get a response.
2. How did our students do on last years state assessments? No response.
3. What is the breakdown of support staff salaries in our district? No response.
4. Why are so many items put on consent calendars that we are not given enough background information? Response was – most of these items are not important.

The list could go on and on. The point being is that elected school officials should never be kept in the dark, should be able to decide agenda items, be transparent, get information they need to do their job, and be responsible to their constituents.

We encourage you to approve HB 2382 and we thank you for your consideration.