



Garry Sigle Testimony
Kansas Association of American Educators (KANAAE)
Senate Commerce Committee
March 18, 2019
Senate Bill 175

Madam Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Garry Sigle. I am the executive director of the Kansas Association of American Educators (KANAAE). I am providing this information today to testify in support of the principles behind Senate Bill 175. My perspective also includes 33 years experience as a Kansas public school teacher and coach.

The Kansas Association of American Educators is a non-union teacher organization. It is a professional association that provides benefits and services to educators such as liability insurance and professional development. KANAAE is not a union and does not bargain contracts for teachers and does not seek to bargain contracts in the future. Prior to becoming the executive director I was a member of KANAAE for the final 15 years of my teaching/coaching career at Riley County High School, Riley, Kansas. The first 18 years of my career I was a member of KNEA. I believe I bring a unique perspective to this committee concerning SB 175 as someone who worked in a public school district with KNEA as the recognized bargaining unit but also as the director of a professional association that provides a choice in professional association membership to educators in Kansas.

This bill is all about teacher choice and putting the control of teacher's personal financial and membership decisions in the hands of the educator. KANAAE functions with that in mind. An educator choosing to join KANAAE can do so at any time of the year and can choose to end their membership at any time. We have structured our professional benefits to accommodate this freedom. There are no restrictions on ending memberships with KANAAE. A simple email notification request to end membership will prompt the immediate cancelling of their membership – sometimes we even process a refund of the \$16.50 month's dues as we think that is good customer service.

In my nearly eight years as the executive director of the Kansas Association of American Educators I have spoken with educators who wanted to join our professional association but couldn't because they had to wait until the end of the school year to exit their current association. Depending on the time of year it can make a significant impact on that teacher's financial commitment as we can't expect them to pay \$198 to us on top of the \$600 to another association.

KANAAE, and our national organization, the Association of American Educators (AAE), have always operated on the belief that a teacher should always have the right to choose when they join our organization and when they want to end their membership no matter the time of year. It is important to note that nothing in this bill restricts the ability of an educator from joining a union. In fact, if educators know they are protected by law with a right to leave at any time perhaps more educators will join a union.

This is in line with our belief that educator association membership should be active, informed, and voluntary, regardless of what association they choose. Educators are well aware of their personal finances and should always have the right to join a professional association at their choosing and end their membership at their choosing.

As stated earlier, KANAAE is a non-union professional education association. As an organization seeking to elevate the professionalism of teachers, we believe SB 175 is a step in the right direction for teachers in Kansas. Education employees deserve the right to make the decisions that best fit their personal needs.

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