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Opponent Written Only Testimony
SB 522 – Standardizing firearm safety education training programs in school districts

Presented to the Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs
Monday, March 14, 2022

By
Deena Horst and Ben Jones, Legislative Liaisons
Kansas State Board of Education

Chairman Olson, Vice-Chair Hildebrand, Ranking Minority Member Foust-Goudeau and members of the Senate Federal and State Committee:

Thank you for allowing us to share with you our thoughts concerning SB 522.

While we are pleased to see that the importance of local control is recognized in the first sentence of the bill when it states “the board of education of a school district may provide firearm safety education programs.” We are supportive of this statement, which allows locally elected board members to determine if the district should provide firearm safety education.

The next sentence poses a problem. The State Board of Education approves curricular standards, which are written by educators who instruct students in that subject matter area. The curriculum standards are used when selecting textbooks and other curricular materials to ensure those items are aligned with the approved curricular standards. There are no “standardized” education “programs,” only standards which guide local board decisions regarding the selection of curricular materials. Furthermore, the Kansas State Department of Education always provides expert support for the educators who write the standards.

SB 522 dictates the programs that must be used, eroding local control. Locally elected boards of education should be able to establish local committees of educators and parents who can be guided by well-thought-out, board approved standards as they determine the curriculum they feel is best suited for their communities, regardless of the subject matter.

Just as textbook companies provide information to each school district, the publishers of the programs listed in the bill have the same opportunity. The decision is then up to locally elected board members if they wish to implement the program. Locally elected board members are already able to implement firearm safety education programs. There is no need for involvement by the State Board of Education or for legislation to give districts permission to implement such programming.

Thank you again for consideration of our thoughts and concerns regarding SB 522.

