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House Bill 2466  
House Committee on Education  
January 25, 2022

Chairman Huebert, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition of House Bill 2466.

Over the years, the Legislature has considered adding a number of graduation requirements on Kansas high school students. There have been bills increasing the number of math and science credits required. There have been bills mandating annual PE for all students. There have been bills to require a financial literacy course.

The expansion of such credit requirements may be done with the best intentions, but there are unintended consequences. Each additional credit that is required reduces the opportunity for a student to choose from electives to round out their education.

A requirement of one full credit of computer science requires a full year, or two semesters of a course. That is equivalent to eliminating two other classes – classes in foreign language, the arts, higher level math or science classes, etc.

In a typical six period high school, a student has 48 semester courses. Currently, eight of those are English language arts, twelve are mathematics and science, six are social science – including one for government, two for PE, and two for fine arts.

College bound students often take between four and eight semesters of foreign language and eight semesters of either band, orchestra, or choral music; some add an additional two semesters of math and two semesters of science. We have reached a point where, for many students, the addition of another course requirement is simply not possible.

We are well aware of how much new technology has exploded in recent years. The youth of today have more computing power on a phone in their pockets than most could have imagined even a decade ago. Students of today are heading straight into a workforce unlike any one of us have ever known, and we agree that we must be making every effort to prepare them for success. This includes giving them the opportunity to take computer science courses – which, for many Kansas students, they already have those opportunities without mandates from a governing body that lacks the constitutional authority to make such mandates.

Furthermore, school districts across the state already face teacher shortages for the most fundamental of subjects. Enrollment in education programs have dropped significantly over the years and remain historically low. How will we fill this specialty teaching position?

While we applaud the effort to invest \$2 million in professional development and scholarships for future teachers, we don't believe it will be enough. As rapidly as the field evolves, teachers would need continuous professional development to stay abreast of the most current trends, and materials and equipment would need regular updating to remain relevant. Learning on obsolete technology is not beneficial. It is our understanding that a similar effort in Arkansas fell short even with an investment of \$15 million.

Although we believe computer science classes are important, we would urge the committee to have the confidence as we do in the State Board of Education – who has the constitutional duty and authority – in determining graduation requirements. How those requirements are applied within a curriculum is then best left to the local decision-making level.