

## **Testimony in Opposition to SB2244**

Chairperson Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

My name is Leslie Bieber, and I am the Superintendent of Alexander Public School District. I am here to testify in strong opposition to SB2244.

Teachers and principals work tirelessly to engage parents in their child's education through multiple forms of communication. Teachers regularly reach out via email, phone calls, texts, through platforms that allow real time communication, and parent-teacher conferences to keep families informed and involved. All staff emails are readily available on the school website, and we have a phone app specifically designed to provide important updates and streamline communication with parents. Schools consistently make efforts to connect with families, ensuring they have access to the information and support they need to be active partners in their child's education.

SB2244 requires districts to write descriptions about every extracurricular club, field trip, etc. Parents already have the ability to inquire about and engage with their children's activities. If parents feel they are not receiving answers, we have policies to file a complaint against personnel, curriculum, bullies, just about anything.

It is important to note that if a parent feels their rights have been violated, they already have legal recourse. Parents can sue school districts if they believe their rights have been infringed upon. This mechanism ensures accountability without the need for additional legislation.

The provision in SB2244 allowing parents to excuse their children from activities or instruction based on moral or religious objections. It leaves it wide open! It opens the argument that the reason Johnny did not complete an assignment is because it was against their moral beliefs. Similarly, the provision allowing parents to excuse their children from school attendance for religious reasons opens the door for abuse of it. Chronic absenteeism is already a national crisis, and SB2244 could exacerbate the issue. If we want higher test scores, choice-ready students, and greater engagement, students must be in school. Allowing vague or unchecked excuses for absences undermines these goals.

Parental rights are fundamental, and they are already protected by current policies. Opposing this bill does not mean that I oppose parental rights, in contrary I welcome parental engagement but SB2244 is not the right pathway to reach it. I ask for a no vote on SB2244.