



*Our mission is to end discrimination based on <sup>ial</sup> orientation and gender identity, and to ensure the dignity, safety, and legal equality of all Kansans.*

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Testimony of Angela Perry, Chair  
Kansas Equality Coalition of the Central Plains  
Senate Committee on Education  
In Support of SB278  
January 31, 2012

Good afternoon madam Chair and members of the committee.

I am Angela Perry-Smith, an educator at a small district in east central Kansas. I am speaking as a proponent of SB 278. I have a B.S. Secondary Education in English from Kansas State University, M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling from Emporia State University and Secondary Education Degree in Music from Washburn University. I currently teach Pre-K through 12 Music and High School English. Previously, I worked at Lyon County Community Corrections as an Intensive Supervision Juvenile Officer, where I implemented one of the first juvenile day reporting programs in Kansas.

For the past 14 years, I have worked with youth from a variety of backgrounds and situations. I have seen implementation of programs and statutes from not only the educational field, but from the correctional field as well. In the implementation of programs and statutes, the success or failure of such depends not only on the current need but how it is implemented.

Kansas current anti-bullying statute is ambiguous with “general terminology” which does not give a clear defined direction for school districts. SB 278 attempts to give a defined direction to school districts. However, the bill fails to address the issue of implementation with respect to educating teachers, staff and students on the issues of bullying.

As an educator, I believe knowledge is everything. In talking with my colleagues about bullying in our school district, I found that many teachers and staff were not fully informed on the issues of bullying (identifying, reacting and prevention). Approximately a year and a half ago, I and a colleague created a presentation for my school on bullying; you have a copy of that presentation attached to this testimony. We presented it to the staff on a required inservice day. The presentation contained information not only about bullying of students, but also about bullying of staff. It was well received and many positive comments were made by the staff. One of the most interesting comments made was how to address the issue of teachers being bullied by students. During the inservice, the staff, including the administration, talked about methods of implementation and how to educate the students on this issue.

This is just one example of staff training. I know other school districts have had similar presentations, but since there’s no requirement that districts report their compliance to the state, implementation of the currently law is inconsistent. We have school districts who have taken a proactive stance on this issue and school districts that have not. This leads to inconsistency and denial across the state, denial that the problem exists in all parts of the state.

As we all know the problem does exist from the smallest communities to the largest. Two years ago an attempt was made by a committee of Kansas Equality Coalition volunteers to obtain information from

school districts on their bullying policies and implementation plans. As chair of that committee, I can tell you that we were unsuccessful in obtaining information from many of the school districts across the state. The committee spent several months and countless hours of their own time attempting to collect data from school districts via email, phone inquiries, letters through the mail, personal contacts. Some school districts were fantastic in giving us information on their policy and procedures with respect to bullying, some referred to the current bullying statute and said they had no other policy in place, others stated they had no problems with bullying and therefore did not have a policy. Sadly, there were some that, although we inquired, just simply refused to send us information. Not only was this extremely frustrating, it showed the lack of consistency in regards to the issue of bullying in our educational system.

The state of Kansas has always been considered a state that provides a quality education to all students, education not only in the academic areas but in areas that allow the student to become a productive citizen in a global society. As an adult and as an educator, it is my responsibility to ensure that all students have the best opportunities available to reach their highest potential. Creating a safe and cohesive learning environment is part of the process of helping the student reach this potential. Teachers, staff and students must have the tools to help them in this process, and education is the key to providing the tools for this success. Without these tools, we are setting OUR future up to fail.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am willing to answer any questions you may have.