



TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF **SB 208**

February 23, 2021

Chairwoman Baumgardner and Members of the Education Committee,

The Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (KAAP) represents more than 400 of the practicing pediatricians in the state. The KAAP has the fundamental goal that all children and adolescents in Kansas have the opportunity to grow safe and strong. It is with this goal in mind that we want to share our testimony opposing the proposed **SB 208**.

School environments play a significant role in the social and emotional development of children. Every child has a right to feel safe and respected at school, but for youth who identify as transgender, this can be challenging. Nearly every aspect of school life may present safety concerns and require negotiations regarding their gender expression, including name/pronoun use, use of bathrooms and locker rooms, sports teams, dances and activities, overnight activities, and even peer groups.

SB 208 would negatively impact and discriminate against both transgender and intersex youth in Kansas. Gender is a complex issue, medically and socially, and as such is not binary for all individuals. Please note, that physicians must make a gender diagnosis at birth based on how the baby looks, or in some cases what the baby looks *most* like, which later can be found to be a misassignment of gender.

Transgender individuals have a gender identity that does not match the gender assigned at birth. The term intersex applies to individuals who cannot be easily categorized anatomically as either male or female, and this can have a diverse set of causes which can include genetic, hormonal, and idiopathic diagnoses. Generally, intersex babies are born with either a phenotypic presentation of gender that either is not clear on physical examination, or they have a genotype (genetic code) that doesn't match their phenotype (anatomy). There are also individuals who do not have the typical XX (female) or XY (male) numbers of sex chromosomes.

Although this bill allows for a student to see a physician to make a determination of the biologic sex, the limitations on a physician for how they can determine gender in this proposed legislation are limited, unreliable and discriminatory.

The KAAP works toward all children and adolescents, regardless of gender identity or expression, receiving care to promote optimal physical, mental, and social well-being. Any discrimination based on gender identity or expression, real or perceived, is damaging to the socioemotional health of children, families, and society.



Involvement in sports, particularly as a member of a sports team, is an integral way for youth to develop psychosocially and help form their social identity. Sports participation helps athletes develop self-esteem, correlates positively with overall mental health, and appears to have a protective effect against suicide.

KAAP opposes SB 208 because this bill will negatively impact the mental health of transgender and intersex youth in Kansas. We welcome any questions you might have and are happy to serve as your resource on all pediatric issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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President
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