

Teacher licensure bill in Ways and Means

The Senate Ways and Means Committee today held a hearing on SB 430, a bill to require Kansas to issue a teaching license to out of state license holders who pass the Praxis and to end teacher training requirements entirely for trade teachers in technical education programs and for anyone who holds a bachelor's degree in a STEM area.

KASB testified in favor of the bill; USA testified as a proponent but emphasized that the State Board was already working to resolve the issues that brought the bill forward; KNEA testified as an opponent.

KNEA lobbyist Mark Desetti pointed out the many things that are included in a teacher's work that are pedagogical in nature: classroom management, differentiated learning, student learning styles, meeting the needs of students with disabilities or gifted students, dealing with the special language needs of English language learners, etc.

"You say it's hard to find a math teacher so you lower the standards to be a math teacher," said Desetti. "Teaching is the only profession where you do this. You have a shortage of physicians in rural communities; should you grant a medical license to an experienced paramedic?"

No action was taken on the bill today although Chairman Masterson announced that it would be considered tomorrow.

House education churning out bills

After spending most of the afternoon hearing about the Lexia reading program, House Education Chairwoman Kasha Kelley announced they had some business to do and quickly pulled two bills up for discussion.

First up was HB 2475, the highly amended financial literacy bill that had passed out of committee but been sent back. The committee passed it out again.

Next came the sex education bill, HB 2620. The bill had been amended into a much

better form by the committee before being tabled. Then, not having been passed out of committee or blessed by leadership, the bill was declared dead at turnaround.

Today however it was resurrected by Chair Kelley. She quickly made a motion to gut the contents of another bill in committee, HB 2307, and stick the original, unamended version of 2620 into it. Now the committee was faced not with the bill as they had amended it in February, but the original version mandating the participation in sex ed programs will be opt-in (it is currently up to the local district to decide whether to use an opt-in or opt out policy).

In a series of moves, some Representatives worked diligently to get the bill amended again but ultimately Kelley prevailed and the committee passed out the original bill on a vote of 10 to 8.

As it goes to the floor, it mandates opt-in, requires sharing of materials with parents upon request, and demands that schools ensure any student who has not opted in to the program will not under any circumstances see any of the materials.