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Lobbying Report

12 November 2025

OSU-527: Educator Protections and Student Accommodations

Overview

Rep. Johnson's bill allows teachers to call students by their chosen pronouns. It does not provide a penalties section in the bill, but it also does not require teachers to use the pronouns. Teachers have the options to choose rather they call students by their preferred pronouns. "My bill is very simple," Johnson says. "All it does is allow teachers to use preferred pronouns and names if they specifically ask the teacher." This bill is also a two-way street. Teachers are allowed to ask students to call them by their preferred pronouns without fear of being reprimanded.

Cons and Lack of Protection

This bill is flawed from several different aspects. Some disagree with this bill on moral grounds, but it deserved to fail because of flaws in the writing. This bill does not protect teachers or students because of its lack of penalties and its contradiction with current state and federal law. Current federal and state law, only recognizes two genders. Therefore, this bill fails under the supremacy clause, which requires state governments to follow federal laws and regulations. This direct breaking of current statutes would cause undeserved stress on educators. Teachers would not enact this right because of fear of persecution and termination. While some argued this bill might take away the

consequence of the law, it would not take away the pursuant if termination did occur or if a school district is sued. School systems in Oklahoma are already underfunded, and they would not be willing to pay legal fees for a lawsuit of this matter. The lack of penalties in this bill also negatively impact this bill. If a teacher or student misuses pronouns out of malicious intent, there is no punishment for said offender. The biggest opposition argument coming before the bill was heard came from a limit on age. This bill would allow any student regardless of grade to use this right. "I cannot vote yes for this," said Congresswoman Barrett from OSU. "Simply, because I think there should be an age restriction."

Moving the Body

This bill was very clear in its intent, and nearly the whole body was unwavering in their support for the bill. The task at hand was not to fail the bill, but it was to try to cause enough opposition for when it is read in the senate. Before the bill was seen, Rep. Lockhart was assisted in brainstorming a list of questions. Ideally, these questions would be asked during questions to make the body reevaluate the bill on content and not just intent. The bill passed with ease by a vote of 55 in the affirmative and 15 in the negative. After the bill was finished, delegates reported the bill went into debate because of the lack of penalties and age limit. These two oppositions were included in the brainstormed list of question provided to Lockhart before the bill began.