



United Community Services of Johnson County

Written and In-Person Testimony in Support of HB 2407

Julie Brewer, Executive Director of United Community Services of Johnson County

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Chair Concannon and House Committee on Child Welfare and Foster Care:

Thank you for the opportunity to **testify in support of HB 2407**. United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) is a nonprofit agency that provides research and data analysis, leads collaborative planning, and mobilizes resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services in Johnson County and the surrounding region.

HB 2407 effectively balances protecting student privacy and parental engagement with the collection of de-identified student data. The use of de-identified data has long played a vital role in researching, analyzing, and responding to issues and trends that impact the health, mental health, and well-being of our community. Throughout its long history, local and state policymakers, law enforcement, funders, and public and private sector health and human service agencies have asked UCS to collect and analyze such data to ensure timely development of programs, interventions and policies that are responsive to the needs in our community. **Allowing access to de-identified data preserves the rights and privacy of the individual while equipping schools, policymakers, and related organizations with the tools to make well-informed decisions.**

One essential student data source that HB 2407 would positively impact is the **Kansas Communities That Care Student Survey**. This survey enables schools to track teen use of harmful substances such as alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, in addition to their perceptions about school and community involvement, and bullying. The survey also provides a baseline for teen participation in, perception of, and attitudes toward both pro-social and anti-social behavior at the peer, school, family and community levels. This statewide survey was initiated in the late 1990s and has been used to guide policy and programming decisions related to substance abuse, juvenile justice, mental health needs, and other areas. Communities That Care survey data indicates areas of greatest need, and long-term trends can help ensure measures are effective.

The Drug and Alcoholism Council (DAC), which UCS facilitates, makes funding recommendations regarding expenditures of alcohol tax dollars from which the taxes are generated in accordance with KSA §79-41a04 as amended. The DAC and the schools and substance use providers in our region have relied on results from student surveys, particularly the Communities That Care Survey, to inform programmatic requests through its Alcohol Tax Fund Grant process. **Due to the student data privacy act, passed in 2022, some school districts no longer participate in the Communities That Care Survey, and those that do participate now experience low rates of participation. This loss of data translates into less effective efforts to prevent and treatment substance use, particularly among youth, in our community.** Previous to this change, the most recent Communities That Care data indicated a decrease in substance use amongst students of all ages in Johnson County. Recent changes that passed in 2022 make it virtually impossible to see if this positive data trend will continue, which would provide the needed research insight to understand and support best practice prevention and intervention programs for youth.

UCS supports HB 2407 and restoring access to de-identified student data.