

Testimony by Shana Burgess, to the House Committee on Child Welfare and Foster Care in support of HB 2407

HB 2407 – Creating conditions for the administration of certain tests, questionnaires, surveys and examinations and eliminating the parental consent requirements.

February 16, 2023

Chair Concannon and members of the House Committee on Child Welfare and Foster Care:

My name is Shana Burgess, and I serve as the Director of Prevention for Johnson County Mental Health Center. On behalf of Johnson County Mental Health Center, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2407.

Over the past 14 years, I have worked in prevention in Kansas focusing on substance use prevention, suicide prevention and mental health promotion. I am active in three local coalitions including the Olathe Communities That Care Coalition, Johnson County Suicide Prevention Coalition, and Johnson County Prevention and Recovery Coalition. I am also a parent in the Blue Valley School District.

Since 1994, our state has had the opportunity to administer the Kansas Communities That Care (KCTC) Student Survey, a research-based survey that is reliable and valid, and is provided annually, free of charge, to students throughout our state. This broad survey paints a picture of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, prosocial and antisocial behavior, and key mental health indicators such as depression and suicide risk among Kansas youth. Identified trends through analysis of this self-report data by 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th grade students can help schools, districts and communities be more proactive, rather than reactive, in addressing adolescent health.

The KCTC survey takes just 27 minutes for students to complete. Students take the survey in 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades, so it only requires two hours of their time through their entire educational experience.

Information derived from this survey is imperative in appropriately allocating limited resources to make the biggest impact in the health and safety of youth across our state and in our local communities. We live in a time and place where resources are limited, priorities are necessary and outcomes are key.

History of KCTC Participation in Johnson County

In Johnson County, schools, parents and community members have been highly invested in utilizing information gathered from the KCTC Student Survey to shape strategies to support children and families throughout our state. From 2010-2014, Johnson County KCTC Student Survey participation rates averaged **79%** with all six

public school districts and many private schools taking the survey. As a result of passing the Student Data Privacy Act, Johnson County participation rates have plummeted to **22%**, and Kansas rates are at **42%** in 2022.

As participation rates decline at the state and local level, it is a fear and possibility that buy-in and confidence in the data will diminish, putting in jeopardy a longstanding data source with historical comparatives dating back to 1995.

Data Driven Decisions

Higher rates of participation equal better data, which leads to tailored strategies that positively impact the health of our children and our communities. The KCTC Student Survey provides data for assessment, planning and measurement of initiatives prioritized to make the most significant positive impact in our community. Good data can help communities rally behind a shared vision, common goals and streamlined approaches to most appropriately and most effectively utilize limited resources to make the biggest impact for the public good.

Opportunities with the Passage of HB 2407

Changing the requirements to administer surveys like the KCTC Student Survey, which is voluntary, does not collect personally identifiable data, and is reported in aggregate groups, will reduce the unnecessary burden to schools and families by allowing parents to opt-out rather than opt-in. My hope is for this change to help to restore levels of participation across our state to match or exceed rates prior to 2015. This relevant data will guide decisions, create buy in and promote collaboration around clearly identified priorities specific to local communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my perspective and I appreciate your consideration of this change.