

Written proponent testimony on HB 2719

Extending the time that school districts may provide notice to parents of the administration of any nonacademic test, questionnaire, survey or examination *and* requiring school districts to contact parents if any such test, questionnaire, survey or examination indicates concerns.

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To: House Education Committee
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Chair Thomas and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 2719. This testimony is my own based on my 45 years of experience as an educator, school counselor, counselor, and counselor educator.

School counselors are members of a team of educators who, as needed, implement universal screeners to identify student needs and work with students, parents, and others to discover the evidence-based practices and supports to meet student needs. School counselors collaborate with other educators and families to design and implement plans to address student needs and to promote students' academic, career and social/emotional success (ASCA, 2019).

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2023) provides direction for school counselors implementing universal screeners that include (1) communicating with parents and/or guardians in a timely manner to identify concerns and resources to promote the development of the student skills needed to be successful in school, and (2) using the results to enhance support and improve tiered instruction in the classroom.

School counselors demonstrate ethical and professional responsibility when implementing their role designed to provide an optimal learning environment for all students. The ASCA Ethical Standards (2022) stipulate that counselors will

“Adhere to the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment when using universal screeners, surveys or needs assessments by informing parents/guardians prior to their use in accordance with school district policies and local, state and federal law.” (B.1.e.)

In addition, the ASCA Ethical Standards (2022) recognize parents as the guiding force in their child's life. ASCA (2023) requires counselors to communicate concerns identified by screeners that affect students safety and welfare in an immediate and efficient manner.

A time extension would be a great enhancement in the life of a school counselor. Time is precious and student needs are many. School counselors in Kansas have an average ratio that far exceeds the recommended one counselor to two hundred fifty counselor students. Requiring counselors to contact parents for a signature they have provided just a few months previously is time consuming and cumbersome. It would be a greater use of a counselor's time and expertise to be teaching students in a classroom lesson on self-regulation, careers of the future or study skills; or visiting with a student and parents on an Individual Plan of Study; or engaging with a student experiencing a trauma. In the ideal world, a form could be sent home with a student and returned signed the next day. However, we do not live in an ideal world.

Low numbers of completed surveys also impact the validity and reliability of data results. The purpose of assessments is to inform decision-making for students and programs. Comprehensive data provide the most accurate results. Accurate results support the most effective outcomes.

Given the importance of screeners implemented in schools and the ethical and professional manner in which they are implemented, I ask that you pass the HB 2719 to extend the time for a parental signature to be valid. Thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Judy Hughey