

**January 22, 2026**

**Testimony to the House Education Committee**

**NAME:** Melinda Parks, lifetime Kansas Citizen

**EMAIL ADDRESS:** melindaparks85@gmail.com

**BILL NUMBER: HB 2420**

**PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL:** OPPONENT

**ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY:** WRITTEN ONLY

Chair and members of the committee,

Thank you for considering my opposition to HB 2420 and its proposed penalties to school district employees who may violate the provision.

We already have a law in Kansas (K.S.A. 72-6287) requiring parental consent for ongoing behavioral health treatment. The current law provides clear guidance while also allowing staff to support immediate needs of students. The proposed law is redundant and not clear. Advocates for students and staff are concerned about unintended consequences such as unnecessary delays in essential care and the chilling effect potential fines can have on the ability of parents and staff being able to work together to keep students safe.

Thank you for your consideration.

Melinda Parks

Lenexa

Tabitha Pavlik  
1908 Coronado Ave.  
Emporia, KS 66801  
[tabitha.pavlik@usd253.net](mailto:tabitha.pavlik@usd253.net)  
785-317-3025

HB2420 Requiring school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing certain school-based mental health services to a student

Opponent - Written Only

January 22, 2026

Hello, Chairperson and Committee. My name is Tabitha Pavlik and I am currently an elementary school counselor in Emporia, KS with USD253. I have been an educator for 21 years and a school counselor for 16 years. As an educator, parent, community member, and a lifelong resident of the state of Kansas, I strongly oppose HB2420 because of the potential impact on the learning environment of all students and society as a whole.

Requiring both verbal and written communication as well as receiving written parental consent prior to helping a student with mental health needs at school takes time and sometimes there are urgent matters to address and a parent cannot be reached. No student is exempt from a potential crisis. I see that the bill makes an exception for a student who may be a suicide risk but what about students who make threats to hurt others or who are in a state of mental health crisis? I advocate for completing a threat assessment for these concerns without immediate parental consent.

Responding to students immediately and teaching them to recognize and manage their emotions in the moment is essential. I interact daily with students handling strong emotions in a manner that requires adult support. Examples include poor social interactions, shutting down or not working, being intentionally hurtful to peers, defying teachers and school rules, disrupting the learning environment, throwing materials and becoming unsafe, and other maladaptive behaviors. Tier 2 and tier 3 mental health services at school are designed for students who are not functioning safely, respectfully, and responsibly with universal tier 1 SEL supports. These students are most at risk for harm to self and others physically, emotionally, and socially.

Finally, mental health is part of an individual's well-being and is woven into every decision and action we as humans make. Limiting mental health services in the school setting for a child in need impacts the learning environment and safety of other students and staff. The lack of access to services for those in need is a danger to society as a whole, as developing appropriate emotional, behavioral, and social functioning skills is imperative to a healthy society.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I can be reached via email for questions.

Tabitha Pavlik

Braeden Pfau, Ed.S., School Psychologist

Email: [braedenpfau@gmail.com](mailto:braedenpfau@gmail.com)

Bill: HB 2420 - Requiring school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing certain school-based mental health services to a student.

Position on bill: Opponent

Written testimony only

Hearing date: 1/22/2026

January 20, 2026

Chairperson and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding House Bill 2420. I am submitting this testimony in my professional role as a school psychologist working in a Kansas public school. I strongly support parental involvement and transparency in schools; however, I respectfully oppose HB 2420 due to its likely unintended consequences for student safety, access to support, and the effective functioning of schools.

First, HB 2420 would significantly delay or prevent timely mental health support for students. School-based mental health services at Tier 2 and Tier 3 of a multi-tiered system of support are often brief, targeted, and responsive to emerging concerns. These supports are frequently initiated after observing warning signs such as withdrawal, escalating behavior, emotional distress, or sudden changes in functioning. Requiring direct verbal notification and written consent prior to initiating any such support creates unavoidable delays, particularly when parents are unreachable during the school day. For many students, delays in support increase the likelihood that concerns will escalate to crisis-level situations, disciplinary consequences, or emergency referrals.

Second, this bill's definition of "school-based mental health service" is overly broad and would capture routine educational practices. HB 2420 defines school-based mental health services as any program, intervention, or strategy designed to influence emotional, behavioral, or social

functioning at Tier 2 or Tier 3. Under this definition, common practices such as short-term check-ins, behavior regulation strategies, social skills instruction, or brief problem-solving meetings could trigger consent requirements. These interventions are often embedded within instructional and behavioral supports and are not analogous to clinical mental health treatment. Treating them as such blurs the line between education and therapy in a way that is inconsistent with how schools operate.

Third, the bill creates a chilling effect on staff decision-making through punitive civil penalties. The imposition of a \$5,000 civil penalty per violation places school districts and employees at significant legal risk for good-faith efforts to support students. Faced with ambiguous definitions and high financial penalties, staff may reasonably choose to avoid providing any individualized support that could be construed as a mental health service. This risk-averse environment undermines early intervention, increases reliance on exclusionary discipline, and ultimately harms students.

Fourth, existing laws already require parental consent for formal evaluations and ongoing services. Kansas and federal law already mandate parental consent for special education evaluations, school-based counseling services, and ongoing mental health interventions. HB 2420 adds a redundant layer of regulation that does not meaningfully increase parental rights but does restrict schools' ability to respond flexibly and appropriately to student needs.

Fifth, the suicide-risk exception is too narrow to ensure student safety. While the bill allows suicide risk screening in cases of credible reports of suicide risk, many students present with serious emotional or behavioral concerns that fall short of an explicit suicide risk but still warrant immediate support. Waiting until concerns rise to the level of suicidal ideation before acting is inconsistent with best practices in prevention and early intervention.

Sixth, the bill may disproportionately harm vulnerable student populations. Students from high-poverty backgrounds, those with unstable housing, students in foster care, and students whose parents are difficult to reach during work hours are most likely to experience delays or

gaps in support under this bill. These students already face barriers to accessing mental health care outside of school, making school-based supports particularly critical.

Overall, HB 2420 would unintentionally reduce student access to timely, preventative support; increase staff hesitation to intervene; and create legal and operational challenges for school districts without improving outcomes for students or families. I respectfully urge the Committee to oppose HB 2420 or substantially amend it to preserve schools' ability to provide early, evidence-based supports while maintaining appropriate parental communication.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Braeden Pfau, Ed.S.

School Psychologist

Sawyer Ptacek  
1260 N. Ash  
Russell, KS 67665  
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785-223-2964

HB 2420 – Requiring parental consent prior to providing any school-based mental health service to a student.

Opponent - Written only

Monday, January 29, 2026

Members of the Kansas Legislature House Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10th Ave  
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Members of the House Committee,

My name is Sawyer Ptacek, and I am currently a 7-12 grade school counselor at Russell Jr–Sr High School in Russell, Kansas. Throughout my eight year career as a school counselor, I have served students across all grade levels in multiple Title I schools. During the 2024-2025 school year, I was honored to be named a Kansas Multi-Level School Counselor of the Year and one of four finalists for Kansas School Counselor of the Year.

I am providing testimony in opposition to House Bill 2420 currently under consideration by the Kansas Education House Committee due to the serious and unintended risks it creates for student safety and mental health.

I want to be clear that I fully support parent involvement in their child's life and academic career. Strong partnerships between schools and families are essential to student success, and involving parents is already a core part of my professional practice. My concern with HB 2420 is not about excluding families, but about delaying support at moments when students need it most.

In my daily work, students rarely walk into my office asking for "Tier 2 or Tier 3 mental health support." They come in upset about friends, overwhelmed by school, or struggling with stress at home. Trust is built through connection and conversation, not paperwork.

I recall a time when a high school student came into my office crying about a conflict involving a friend. As we talked, I began to notice concerning themes in her thoughts and feelings. After about twenty minutes, I asked if she had ever thought about hurting herself or about suicide. She shared that she had, but had never told anyone before.

Because she felt safe speaking freely, I was able to help her involve her parents and connect her with additional mental health services she urgently needed. That outcome depended entirely on the ability to meet with her immediately, listen without barriers, and follow professional judgment as the conversation unfolded.

Under HB 2420, that interaction could have been delayed or disrupted. The conversation did not begin as a suicide-related discussion, and it likely would never have reached that life-saving disclosure if the student believed help required prior permission or administrative steps. Timing matters in mental health, and hesitation can mean missed warning signs.

Requiring parental consent before providing Tier 2 or Tier 3 support shifts school counselors from proactive professionals to gatekeepers of delayed care. Students who are uncertain, fearful, or unsure how to explain what they are feeling may decide it is safer to say nothing at all. When students disengage from support, concerns do not resolve—they intensify. This legislation would disproportionately affect students already facing trauma, family instability, mental health stigma, or fear of consequences at home.

Being a school counselor is already a difficult and emotionally taxing profession. We face accusations of indoctrinating students, being an excuse to get out of class, and more. Despite this, my primary role is to be a trusted adult—someone who offers help without judgment and stands in a student's corner when they feel no one else will. With existing counselor shortages and high student-to-counselor ratios, HB 2420 risks making the profession less sustainable and undermining recent progress in improving access to student support.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose House Bill 2420. Protecting students means ensuring timely access to trusted, trained adults who can identify concerns early and respond appropriately—while continuing to partner with families whenever possible. This bill, though well-intentioned, would move us further away from that goal.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important issue, as well as your service to the people of Kansas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sawyer Ptacek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sawyer Ptacek  
Former K-6 Licensed School Counselor, 4 years  
Current 7-12 Licensed School Counselor, 4 years

**January 22, 2026**

**Testimony to the House Education Committee**

**NAME:** Jill Quigley

**EMAIL ADDRESS:** jill.j.quigley@gmail.com

**BILL NUMBER:** 2420

**OPPONENT**

**WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY**

Chair and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opposition to HB2450.

We already have a law in Kansas (K.S.A. 72-6287) requiring parental consent for ongoing behavioral health treatment. HB2420 is redundant and not clearly written.

Please vote against HB2420. Facilitate the support of students facing mental health problems; DON'T erect barriers and certainly DON'T fine teachers/counselors who are trying to help students.

Jill Quigley

Lenexa

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Andrea G. Rairden  
753 Highland Ave  
Salina, KS 67401  
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785-407-7274

HB 2420 Requiring parental consent prior to providing any school-based mental health service to a student

Opponent - Written only

Monday, January 19, 2026

Members of the Kansas Legislature House Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10th Ave  
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Members of the House Committee,

As a veteran educator of 22.5 years, I am writing to respectfully express my opposition to House Bill 2420 as is written, currently under consideration by the Kansas Education House Committee.

While I fully support the involvement of parents in their children's education and well-being, this bill would create unnecessary barriers for students to access critical school-based mental health services. Research shows that many students struggle with anxiety, depression, trauma, and other mental health challenges that can significantly impact their ability to learn and thrive.

Schools are often the most accessible and trusted place where struggling students can receive timely support or referrals, especially for families facing barriers. Numerous times I have worked with students in conjunction with their parents/guardians, teachers, and mental health professionals to make school—and life—a better environment for them to both live and learn.

Requiring explicit parental consent before a student can receive certain services may discourage vulnerable children from seeking help due to fear, stigma, or complex family dynamics. Not all students feel safe or comfortable sharing their mental health needs with caregivers immediately — and delaying assistance can exacerbate emotional distress, behavior problems, and academic difficulties. In some cases, mental health issues are identified first by trained school personnel, and restricting timely intervention could result in harm.

By imposing rigid consent requirements, this bill could unintentionally undermine early intervention and harm student well-being. Professional school employees may not help a child in need in fear of the retribution this bill exhibits; in fact it undermines their professionalism the state of Kansas requires of our educators. This could leave our most precious asset, our children, to maneuver alone through the difficulties that adolescence naturally presents.

Additionally, schools and school mental health professionals already operate under existing ethical protocols designed to protect student privacy and safety while involving families appropriately. It's important that legislative efforts strengthen — not hinder — the ability of schools to support students holistically.

Protecting the mental health of Kansas students should be a top priority. I urge you to reconsider HB 2420 in its current form and pursue solutions that enhance, rather than restrict, student access to essential mental health care.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue and for your service to the people of Kansas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrea G. Rairden".

Andrea G. Rairden

Former 7-9 English/Language Arts Educator, 13 years

Former 9-12 Licensed School Counselor, 8 years

Current 7-12 Assistant Principal, year 1

Marcus Relphorde

School Counselor, Overland Park, KS

HB 2420 Requiring school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing certain school-based mental health services to a student.

Opponent - Written Only

January 22, 2026

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Marcus Relphorde, and I am a high school counselor serving students in the state of Kansas. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 2420.

As school counselors, we are bound by both state law and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Ethical Standards. These standards emphasize a careful and deliberate balance: honoring the legal rights of parents while also protecting a student's right to a safe, confidential space for support, growth, and early intervention. HB 2420 threatens to disrupt this balance by requiring written parental consent before school counselors can provide Tier 2 or Tier 3 mental health support, even prior to having clarifying or exploratory conversations with students.

Research consistently shows that in states with mandatory parental consent laws for school-based mental health services, there is a significant decrease in the number of students who seek and receive help for mental health concerns. Adolescents are far less likely to ask for support when they fear that doing so will immediately trigger parental notification, regardless of context or severity. This bill risks silencing the very students who most need help.

By adding a bureaucratic layer of verbal and written notification for "any intervention designed to influence emotional, behavioral, or social functioning," HB 2420 creates barriers during a critical window of prevention. Many of the most effective school-based mental health interventions occur early when an issue is emerging and most responsive to support. Requiring formal consent before providing even basic Tier 2 support risks turning students away before problems escalate into crises.

From a practical standpoint, this legislation would significantly impair our ability to do our jobs effectively. If counselors are required to call parents and obtain written consent every time a student needs support beyond Tier 1, we will lose valuable time and capacity. School counselors already manage large caseloads and complex responsibilities. This bill would divert our efforts away from students and toward paperwork, delays, and missed opportunities for timely care.

There are also serious safety concerns to consider. Without the ability to have an initial, clarifying conversation with a trusted school professional, some students may retreat entirely, allowing anxiety, depression, trauma, or suicidal ideation to worsen unnoticed. In particularly

concerning scenarios, a student may disclose abuse, neglect, or trauma occurring at home. Requiring educators to first contact parents before engaging in meaningful conversation could place that student in immediate danger. Additionally, students may simply stop approaching school counselors, teachers, or other trusted adults if they know those adults are legally required to call home before listening.

It is important to be clear: educators and school mental health professionals want to partner with families. We deeply value transparency and recognize parents as the primary guides in their children's lives. In practice, counselors regularly involve parents when concerns rise to a level that warrants ongoing intervention, referral, or safety planning. However, effective partnerships are built on trust and professional judgment, not rigid mandates that remove discretion and nuance from complex human situations.

HB 2420, while likely well-intentioned, would have the unintended consequence of reducing access to mental health support, increasing risk for vulnerable students, and undermining the trust that allows school counselors to serve as a first line of prevention. I respectfully urge the committee to oppose this bill and to protect the ability of Kansas schools to respond promptly, ethically, and safely to students in need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Marcus Relphorde  
High School Counselor  
Overland Park, KS

**From:** [Janey Rens](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#)  
**Subject:** HB2420  
**Date:** Monday, January 19, 2026 2:37:25 PM

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[You don't often get email from [janeydrewrens@gmail.com](mailto:janeydrewrens@gmail.com). Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

Proposed legislation in Kansas (HB 2420) would require parental consent before school counselors can provide Tier 2 or Tier 3 mental health support to students.

What this means for kids:

Students who ask for help may be told to wait.  
Early intervention is delayed by paperwork.  
Students who don't feel safe disclosing at home may stop asking.  
Support becomes reactive instead of preventative.

And this does not impact students equally.

The students who need school counselors the most, those who are already high-risk, experiencing trauma, family instability, mental health stigma, or fear of punishment at home, are the very students most likely to lose access to support.

This legislation creates barriers, blind spots, and delays.  
When access to help is restricted, problems don't disappear. They escalate.

This doesn't protect students.  
It increases risk and sends a dangerous message: "Help comes with conditions."

Janey Rens

**From:** RINEBERG, AUBREE  
**To:** House Education  
**Subject:** House Bill 2420  
**Date:** Saturday, January 17, 2026 1:03:26 PM

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You don't often get email from arineberg@tps501.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

Good afternoon,

My name is Aubree Rineberg and I am currently a school counselor at State Street Elementary School in Topeka, KS. Our school is a Title 1 school that has an extremely high free and reduced lunch population. We have many students who have experienced unspeakable trauma and are currently living in homes where one or more of their basic needs is not met. This leads to internalizing and externalizing behaviors that school counselors see at school and we are the front line for getting these students the help and support they need.

Unfortunately, many of the reasons our students are effected is due to lack of involvement with their families or just out right abuse or neglect. If this bill were to pass, my ability to work with these kids and teach them appropriate social skills, communication strategies, and coping strategies would be tarnished. It is often very hard to get in touch with some of our most needy families. I would have to sit back and watch a student continue to struggle while I know that each day that passes, it will be even harder to overcome the traumas they have endured. In addition, this also may limit my ability to identify students who are indeed experiencing abuse and neglect and getting them the support they so desperately need. Sometimes, school counselors are the only ones students will disclose this information to and I'm very concerned that if I'm unable to work closely with these children, these situations may never discovered.

As a parent myself, I understand the need to keep families informed. I want to work collaboratively to help our students succeed and I do believe a partnership with families is a huge piece. However, not every parent thinks the way I do and this can be due to selfish reasons such as not wanting to get in trouble for their own choices. I had this exact example happen this week at my own school. I will continue to advocate for what is best for my students because they are important and they deserve it.

Aubree Rineberg School Counselor State Street Elementary 500 NE Sumner Avenue Topeka, KS 66616 785 438 6817

January 19, 2026

Chairman Estes and Esteemed Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my opposition to House Bill 2420. For many students, schools are their only access to healthcare. Additionally, schools often serve as the first point of contact for various crises, including mental health issues, emotional distress, and social-emotional challenges. These issues significantly impact students' daily lives and their ability to learn effectively. As a Registered Nurse with nearly 15 years of experience, including eight years as a school nurse, I have witnessed firsthand the vital role that educational institutions play in addressing students' mental health needs.

While I believe that parents should be the primary decision-makers regarding their children's care, HB 2420 would create dangerous barriers to accessing necessary services while students are at school. Mental health crises can be urgent and life-threatening; requiring parental consent could significantly delay the response to these situations and limit the resources available to students in need.

Current laws, such as K.S.A. 72-6287, already require schools to obtain parental consent for ongoing behavioral health treatment. Furthermore, HB 2420 may result in delays in care and hinder school staff from conducting essential check-ins on students who exhibit signs of emotional or mental distress, such as crying or verbal indications of crisis. Mandating written parental consent could delay responses by hours or even days, which is both unreasonable and detrimental to students' well-being.

In conclusion, the mental health of adolescents is a critical issue that deserves serious attention. I respectfully urge you to reconsider and reject HB 2420.

Thank you for your consideration,



Ruby Romero, BSN, RN  
deherrera2006@gmail.com

**From:** [Willie and Betsy Schmelzle](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#)  
**Date:** Monday, January 19, 2026 4:56:46 PM

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You don't often get email from [wbschmelzle@gmail.com](mailto:wbschmelzle@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

I am opposed to the proposed legislation in Kansas (HB 2420) would require parental consent before school counselors can provide Tier 2 or Tier 3 mental health support to students. I have been teaching elementary school for 24 years and I have seen a lot of students come and go.

The students who need school counselors the most, those who are already high-risk, experiencing trauma, family instability, mental health stigma, or fear of punishment at home, are the very students most likely to lose access to support.

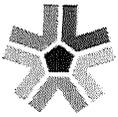
This legislation creates barriers, blind spots, and delays. When access to help is restricted, problems don't disappear. They escalate.

This doesn't protect students.

It increases risk and sends a dangerous message: "Help comes with conditions."

Please, for the love of our students, do not pass this legislation.

Sincerely,  
William C Schmelzle, teacher



# SHAWNEE MISSION

## SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dr. Michael Schumacher, Superintendent  
Shawnee Mission School District  
[michaelschumacher@smsd.org](mailto:michaelschumacher@smsd.org)  
House Bill 2420 Prior consent for services  
Opponent  
Written  
January 22, 2026

Chairwoman Estes and Members of the Committee:

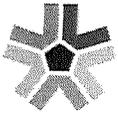
The Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) is opposed to House Bill 2420, which would require school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing certain school-based mental-health services.

The Shawnee Mission School District legislative platform reflects the policy priorities of our Board of Education and our District. As our legislative platform states, SMSD “supports policies and funding that maintain and strengthen district capacity to provide a healthy and safe learning environment,” and we believe HB 2420 challenges that priority and our ability to serve our students and their well-being. Our approved 2026 platform asserts:

- Maintain the authority of local boards of education to make decisions benefitting the health and well-being of students and staff, in collaboration with parental authorities and local and state public health authorities.
- Support increased funding and increased access to mental and behavioral health services for students and families, including support for suicide prevention services and programs.

At SMSD we know and value the communication and collaboration we have with our parents, families, and guardians. While we appreciate and understand the intent of HB 2420, we are concerned about the implications this may have on teachers or mental health professionals that work everyday to prioritize students’ health, safety, and well-being. We’re concerned that a civil penalty of \$5,000 may result in fear of serving students and instead of responding to our students’ needs. We appreciate the suicide risk assessment exception, but we also know how critical follow-up and ongoing mental health supports are for students who may be experiencing that.

Overall, we’re concerned HB 2420 is not the best way to respond to students’ mental and behavioral health and well-being, especially for those students who rely on and trust school-based services. So many students across Kansas are expected to deal with so much—family crises and disruption, bullying, anxiety, etc. But we know that mental health intervention in schools helps keep our students safe and



SHAWNEE MISSION  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

improves their well-being in the long run, while also improving student attendance and achievement.

For these reasons we oppose HB 2420 in its current form. If I can provide any additional information or answer questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

If I can provide any additional information or answer questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Schumacher".

Dr. Michael Schumacher  
Superintendent

**Written Testimony to the House Committee on Education  
HB2420**

**Date of Hearing: January 22, 2026**

**Name: Melanie Scott**

**Email: [melanie.d.scott78@gmail.com](mailto:melanie.d.scott78@gmail.com)**

Kansas constituent in Manhattan, Kansas, a licensed Kansas school counselor, and a parent of two children (a student at a Kansas public middle school and a student at a Kansas university),  
**Opponent of HB 2420-*Requiring school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing certain school-based mental health services to a student***

Dear Chairperson and Members of the House Committee on Education:

This written testimony is in opposition to HB 2420. While parent collaboration is already encouraged and a vital part of each child's education and well-being, this specific bill creates barriers that impact student safety and access to mental health support for our Kansas students. What could be positive intent of school staff listening and caring for the well-being of a student may result in a \$5000 fine to the district by the definition of the current bill. We recognize the parents' rights to be a guiding voice in the lives of their child. Let's encourage collaboration by teaming together to support the academic success and well-being of each student versus legislation that could lead to students feeling unsupported during distressful times.

**This bill does not clearly define what is considered tier 1, tier 2, and tier 3 supports.** This confusion could impact services provided by licensed mental health professionals in schools. One example that is not clearly defined is short-term counseling. Short-term counseling sessions help provide life skills, resources, and encouragement that lead to academic, post-secondary, and social-emotional success. Students may not know how to verbalize what they are feeling and choose to visit with trusted school staff. They may request the service of a trained school mental health professional to help process life events.

Sometimes our students face barriers impeding academics that require a higher level of care and support. Our American School Counselor Association ethics already state the importance of informing parents when we are providing tier 2 and tier 3 support such as **group counseling** or **school-based mental health therapeutic services**. According to our ethics and Kansas law, we also notify parents in tier 3 situations when there is **serious or foreseeable harm to the students or others**. We work to provide resources for the family and reintegration support back into school after a student crisis.

**This bill does not state how short-term individual counseling falls into one of the tiered categories. It does not provide exemption for situations of neglect and abuse. Here are a few examples where HB 2420 is not clearly defined and could have unintentional consequences:**

**Example A-Short-term individual counseling:** A student visits the counselor's office and shares a conflict with a friend that happened over the weekend. The student is having

trouble concentrating in math and needs to process what happened. The counselor listens, helps regulate the crying student, helps the student with conflict resolution skills, and sends the student back to class as timely as possible. The counselor follows up later that week to check in with the student and determine if further support is needed. *According to this bill, what tier does the first session fall under, and what tier does the second session fall under when we do check-ins with the student?*

**Example B-Abuse and neglect:** A peer disclosed to a friend about a situation where abuse happened over the weekend. That peer tells a coach and the coach shares it with the school counselor. *When the coach talks to the peer, what tier does that fall under? When the school counselor talks to the student about possible abuse, is that protected from the \$5,000 fine and excluded from getting parent permission first, especially in situations where the parent is the possible perpetrator?*

**Example C-Conversations that build rapport and lead to sharing resources with families:** A teacher notices a change in a student. There is a noticeable smell and the student is wearing the same hoodie all week. Instead of the normal class participation and engagement, the student has been putting his hood over his head and sleeps through class. The concerned teacher, recognizing a pattern, visits with the student after class. The student who trusts the teacher, shares their water has been cut off for a week. The parents are working, but there is not enough money to pay the water bill for another week. He also states there was not enough food last weekend. The teacher refers the student to the school social worker. *What tier is the teacher/student conversation? What tier is the social worker conversation to get information from the student before the social worker has a chance to contact the parents about community resources? This bill, including the fine, could cause staff hesitancy to approach students and delay appropriate services.*

**Example D-An academic conversation that turns social-emotional:** A school counselor calls in a student to visit about attendance and failing grades. The student has been absent more than usual in the last few weeks and is failing most of her classes. What is starting out as an academic visit, turns into more when the student discloses a recent breakup. *What tier does this conversation fall under? It started academic and now in the same session, the student has disclosed a breakup. Does the school counselor have to stop the conversation with the crying student to call parents to get verbal and written consent to continue the conversation? If there is a need to stop the conversation for parental consent, situations like this could harm rapport building and trust. This would prevent students from wanting to process situations that could escalate into something further.*

Please consider the unintended consequences of HB 2420. Let's work together to provide a partnership between parents and school staff. Effective partnerships are built on trust and collaboration, versus mandates that treat good intention and ethical support as a legal liability. Please work with, rather than against the professionally trained, licensed professionals serving our Kansas students. Please do not move this bill forward.

Respectfully,  
Melanie Scott, Licensed School Counselor, LPC

HOUSE BILL No. 2420

Anne Marie Strobel  
Kansas Connections Academy USD 218  
10551 Barkley Street, Suite 113, Overland Park, KS 66212  
[astrobel@kca.connectionsacademy.org](mailto:astrobel@kca.connectionsacademy.org)  
620.794.8815

HB No. 2420 - requiring parental consent prior to providing any school-based mental health service to a student; establishing exceptions to such requirement; authorizing the imposition of a civil penalty for each violation thereof.

Position: Opposed

Written only

Hearing: 1/22 1:30pm

Thank you, chairwoman and committee. My name is Anne Marie Strobel. I am a School Counselor for Kansas Connections Academy. I have been a school counselor since 2014 and have served in both elementary, middle and high school levels. I've also served within brick and mortar buildings as well as my current position, an online school. Prior to being a school counselor, I was a therapist in a mental health center and saw many children on my caseload. I am also a member of our local school board in Anderson County.

I have many concerns with this bill and how detrimental it could be to students. While many parents would gladly give parental consent for their student to be seen by a counselor, there would be some who would not be willing, due to their lack of understanding of what we provide for their child. Many times, these are the students who are in more need of services. This could lead to many crisis situations, as they would not be receiving regular support for social emotional needs that may not be addressed at home. Additionally, this could create situations where students who are in abusive homes would not have permission to speak to the very persons who could help get them protection and further care.

I would also add that as a school counselor, we often provide classroom lessons on subjects such as respect, kindness, persistence, loyalty as well as social/soft skills. If a student were to not have permission for a counselor to work with them, they would have to leave the classroom during this time, which would be disruptive, and miss out on learning opportunities that they very well may not be learning at home.

I urge you to consider the negative consequences of this bill in relation to our children and how this bill could create a larger gap in students who are emotionally healthy and able to use social skills versus those who are not.

I will stand for questions.

**From:** Candy Taylor  
**To:** House Education  
**Subject:** HB 2420  
**Date:** Friday, January 16, 2026 10:16:11 PM

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[You don't often get email from 21candytaylor@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

This is a bad idea and will keep the most vulnerable students from seeking help. Not all families are functional, and this may be the only way a child can get help. I speak as a 50 year veteran of teaching.

Candyse Taylor

Parsons

Sent from my iPhone

Laura Taylor

School Counselor, Overland Park, KS

Email: lkt3190@gmail.com

HB 2420 Requiring school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing certain school-based mental health services to a student.

Opponent - Written Only

January 22, 2026

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Laura Taylor, and I am a high school counselor serving students in the state of Kansas. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 2420.

As school counselors, we are bound by both state law and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Ethical Standards. These standards emphasize a careful and deliberate balance: honoring the legal rights of parents while also protecting a student's right to a safe, confidential space for support, growth, and early intervention. HB 2420 threatens to disrupt this balance by requiring written parental consent before school counselors can provide Tier 2 or Tier 3 mental health support, even prior to having clarifying or exploratory conversations with students.

Research consistently shows that in states with mandatory parental consent laws for school-based mental health services, there is a significant decrease in the number of students who seek and receive help for mental health concerns. Adolescents are far less likely to ask for support when they fear that doing so will immediately trigger parental notification, regardless of context or severity. This bill risks silencing the very students who most need help.

By adding a bureaucratic layer of verbal and written notification for "any intervention designed to influence emotional, behavioral, or social functioning," HB 2420 creates barriers during a critical window of prevention. Many of the most effective school-based mental health interventions occur early when an issue is emerging and most responsive to support. Requiring formal consent before providing even basic Tier 2 support risks turning students away before problems escalate into crises.

From a practical standpoint, this legislation would significantly impair our ability to do our jobs effectively. If counselors are required to call parents and obtain written consent every time a student needs support beyond Tier 1, we will lose valuable time and capacity. School counselors already manage large caseloads and complex responsibilities. This bill would divert our efforts away from students and toward paperwork, delays, and missed opportunities for timely care.

There are also serious safety concerns to consider. Without the ability to have an initial, clarifying conversation with a trusted school professional, some students may retreat entirely, allowing anxiety, depression, trauma, or suicidal ideation to worsen unnoticed. In particularly concerning scenarios, a student may disclose abuse, neglect, or trauma occurring at home. Requiring educators to first contact parents before engaging in meaningful conversation could place that student in immediate danger. Additionally, students may simply stop approaching school counselors, teachers, or other trusted adults if they know those adults are legally required to call home before listening.

It is important to be clear: educators and school mental health professionals want to partner with families. We deeply value transparency and recognize parents as the primary guides in their children's lives. In practice, counselors regularly involve parents when concerns rise to a level that warrants ongoing intervention, referral, or safety planning. However, effective partnerships are built on trust and professional judgment, not rigid mandates that remove discretion and nuance from complex human situations.

HB 2420, while likely well-intentioned, would have the unintended consequence of reducing access to mental health support, increasing risk for vulnerable students, and undermining the trust that allows school counselors to serve as a first line of prevention. I respectfully urge the committee to oppose this bill and to protect the ability of Kansas schools to respond promptly, ethically, and safely to students in need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Laura Taylor  
High School Counselor  
Overland Park, KS

Rachel Thexton  
USD 428 - Great Bend High School  
2027 Morton St. Great Bend KS 67530  
[rachel.thexton@usd428.net](mailto:rachel.thexton@usd428.net)  
785-713-1640 - Cell  
620-793-1616 - School

HB 2420 - Requiring school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing certain school-based mental health services to a student.

Opponent - Written only

1/22/26 - Hearing Date

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 2420.

I offer this perspective as both a mother of three children (ages 19, 14, and 11) and as a dedicated school counselor. I have served as a counselor at Great Bend High School for ten years, and prior to that, I served as a K-12 counselor in La Crosse. I take great pride in my profession and the work we do to support Kansas students. Currently, I estimate that 75% of my day is dedicated to counseling students regarding their mental health.

I am deeply concerned about the ramifications this bill would have on our students. While I fully respect parental rights and strive for transparency in my work, requiring parental permission prior to having mental health conversations with students could be detrimental.

Unfortunately, there are children in our state who are being abused by their parents or guardians. If counselors are required to obtain permission from a parent before speaking with a student, a child suffering from abuse will effectively be cut off from their most accessible trusted adult. We risk leaving these children vulnerable and isolated because the law would require us to seek permission from the very source of their abuse.

Furthermore, there are significant logistical concerns. I frequently attempt to contact parents regarding grades, attendance, or mental health, only to receive no response. If we are unable to reach a parent, or if a parent is unwilling to be part of the solution, how do we support the child? This bill creates a barrier that prevents us from helping students who are simply looking for support.

When I read this bill, numerous past students came to mind, students I was able to help escape unimaginable situations or guide through significant emotional distress or a simple conversation about a disappointing situation. Under the restrictions of HB 2420, I would not have been able to help those students simply because they lacked a caring adult at home willing to answer the

phone or sign a paper. The thought that Kansas children could lose counselors as a resource is deeply distressing to me. It has made me sick to my stomach for days trying to process this.

Finally, speaking as a parent, I want my own children to have adults they trust and can turn to when they are worried or stressed. Parenting is hard work, and I understand that there are times my children may be upset with me. In those moments, I want them to have timely access to trained professionals who can help them navigate tough times safely.

I urge you to consider the unintended but dangerous consequences of this bill and vote in opposition to HB 2420.

Respectfully,

Rachel Thexton  
School Counselor

Derek Thompson

School Counselor, Overland Park, KS

Email: [derek.thompson2380@gmail.com](mailto:derek.thompson2380@gmail.com)

HB 2420 Requiring school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing certain school-based mental health services to a student.

Opponent - Written Only

January 22, 2026

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Derek Thompson, and I am a high school counselor serving students in the state of Kansas. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 2420.

As school counselors, we are bound by both state law and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Ethical Standards. These standards emphasize a careful and deliberate balance: honoring the legal rights of parents while also protecting a student's right to a safe, confidential space for support, growth, and early intervention. HB 2420 threatens to disrupt this balance by requiring written parental consent before school counselors can provide Tier 2 or Tier 3 mental health support, even prior to having clarifying or exploratory conversations with students.

Research consistently shows that in states with mandatory parental consent laws for school-based mental health services, there is a significant decrease in the number of students who seek and receive help for mental health concerns. Adolescents are far less likely to ask for support when they fear that doing so will immediately trigger parental notification, regardless of context or severity. This bill risks silencing the very students who most need help.

By adding a bureaucratic layer of verbal and written notification for "any intervention designed to influence emotional, behavioral, or social functioning," HB 2420 creates barriers during a critical window of prevention. Many of the most effective school-based mental health interventions occur early when an issue is emerging and most responsive to support. Requiring formal consent before providing even basic Tier 2 support risks turning students away before problems escalate into crises.

From a practical standpoint, this legislation would significantly impair our ability to do our jobs effectively. If counselors are required to call parents and obtain written consent every time a student needs support beyond Tier 1, we will lose valuable time and capacity. School counselors already manage large caseloads and complex responsibilities. This bill would divert our efforts away from students and toward paperwork, delays, and missed opportunities for timely care.

There are also serious safety concerns to consider. Without the ability to have an initial, clarifying conversation with a trusted school professional, some students may retreat entirely, allowing anxiety, depression, trauma, or suicidal ideation to worsen unnoticed. In particularly concerning scenarios, a student may disclose abuse, neglect, or trauma occurring at home. Requiring educators to first contact parents before engaging in meaningful conversation could place that student in immediate danger. Additionally, students may simply stop approaching school counselors, teachers, or other trusted adults if they know those adults are legally required to call home before listening.

It is important to be clear: educators and school mental health professionals want to partner with families. We deeply value transparency and recognize parents as the primary guides in their children's lives. In practice, counselors regularly involve parents when concerns rise to a level that warrants ongoing intervention, referral, or safety planning. However, effective partnerships are built on trust and professional judgment, not rigid mandates that remove discretion and nuance from complex human situations.

HB 2420, while likely well-intentioned, would have the unintended consequence of reducing access to mental health support, increasing risk for vulnerable students, and undermining the trust that allows school counselors to serve as a first line of prevention. I respectfully urge the committee to oppose this bill and to protect the ability of Kansas schools to respond promptly, ethically, and safely to students in need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Derek Thompson  
High School Counselor  
Overland Park, KS

Jessica Tjaden  
tjadenjessica6@gmail.com  
HB 2420 – Parental Consent for Tier 2/3 Mental Health Support  
Opponent  
Written Only  
January 19, 2026

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 2420, which would require parental consent before school counselors can provide Tier 2 or Tier 3 mental health support to students. While intended to protect students, this legislation would create significant barriers that put students at greater risk.

Students who seek help may be told to wait, delaying early intervention and shifting support from preventative to reactive. Those who do not feel safe disclosing at home—often the students who need help the most—may stop asking for help altogether. High-risk students experiencing trauma, family instability, or mental health stigma are disproportionately affected and would face the greatest obstacles to receiving support.

This bill does not protect students. It creates blind spots, delays care, and increases the likelihood that problems will escalate. Mental health support in schools is essential to student well-being and success. Restricting access sends a dangerous message: “Help comes only if your home allows it.”

Students deserve timely and equitable access to support. For the safety and well-being of Kansas students, I urge the committee to oppose HB 2420.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jessica Tjaden

Name: Hannah Toews, EdS, School Psychologist

Email: [toewshan@usd427.net](mailto:toewshan@usd427.net)

Bill number/title: HB 2420 Requiring school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing certain school-based mental health services to a student.

Position on bill: opponent

Written only testimony

Hearing date: 1/22/2026

Topeka, Kansas

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Hannah Toews, and I am a licensed school psychologist serving students and families in Topeka, Kansas. I am writing in strong opposition to House Bill 2420 because it would significantly undermine schools' ability to support students' academic, behavioral, and emotional needs particularly those of our most vulnerable children.

To understand the harm this bill would cause, it is important to understand how schools support students through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

Tier 1 supports are universal supports provided to all students, such as social-emotional learning instruction, classroom behavior expectations, and schoolwide mental health promotion.

Tier 2 supports are more targeted interventions for students who need additional help, such as small-group counseling, social skills groups, or check-in/check-out systems.

Tier 3 supports are more highly individualized services designed for students with intensive needs.

This tiered approach allows schools to provide students with the right support at the right time, often preventing challenges from escalating into crises. MTSS is proactive, preventative, and evidence-based.

House Bill 2420 would place barriers on Tier 2 school-based mental health supports that are critical to student well-being and school safety. As a school psychologist, my work depends heavily on consistent communication and partnership with families. However, many of the families we serve are living in poverty and are already operating at maximum capacity. Parents may be working night shifts, multiple jobs, or inconsistent hours simply to meet basic needs. Phones are frequently disconnected due to financial strain. Communication challenges are not a lack of care, they are a reflection of systemic stress.

This bill assumes that all families have equal access, time, and resources to engage in immediate and ongoing communication. That assumption is not grounded in reality.

Even more concerning, some of our most vulnerable students (those experiencing abuse, neglect, or instability at home) may lose access to safe, school-based supports altogether. Tier 2 counseling groups often provide the only safe space where these students can express what they are experiencing so that school staff can intervene appropriately and connect them to help.

In education, we work tirelessly to prevent escalation. We teach emotional regulation, coping skills, and social problem-solving before behaviors become dangerous. When those preventative supports are restricted, students do not simply “do better.” They escalate.

I ask you to consider the real-world impact of this bill:

Do you want classrooms where students are flipping desks because they were denied early mental health supports?

Do you want children being physically hurt because schools were prevented from teaching social-emotional skills before behaviors reached a crisis point?

School-based mental health supports are not optional extras. They are essential for learning, safety, and student success. House Bill 2420 would not protect children, it would place them at greater risk.

I urge you to oppose House Bill 2420 and allow educators and school mental health professionals to continue doing what we are trained to do: support students, partner with families, and intervene early so that all children can learn in safe, supportive environments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Hannah Toews, EdS

School Psychologist

Topeka, Kansas

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**HB 2420:** Requirement for Parental Consent for School Based Mental Health Services

**Position:** Opponent

**Testimony:** Written Only

January 15, 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to share concerns regarding HB 2420 and its impact on school based mental health services, particularly at the elementary level. As an elementary school counselor, my role is to provide timely, preventative, and responsive support to students throughout the school day. Much of this work occurs through brief check ins, crisis response, classroom lessons, and support during moments of emotional or behavioral dysregulation. These interactions are essential to maintaining student safety and supporting learning.

House Bill 2420 would require parental consent prior to providing some services within our schools. While family collaboration is already a vital part of school counseling practice, this requirement would create significant barriers to meeting students' immediate needs. Elementary students often require support in the moment to regulate emotions, resolve peer conflict, or cope with stressors. Delays in support can lead to escalation, increased classroom disruption, and greater emotional distress.

In addition, my current caseload is nearly 400 students to one counselor. Requiring consent each time support is needed would not be feasible and would significantly reduce my ability to serve students effectively. The added administrative burden could result in hesitation to provide support and limit access for students who rely on school as their primary source of mental health care.

School counselors are trained professionals who follow ethical standards, district policies, and existing legal requirements. We already communicate with families and seek consent when ongoing or intensive services are necessary. HB 2420 risks undermining these established practices and weakening the support systems that help students succeed.

I respectfully urge you to consider the unintended consequences this bill may have on students, families, and school communities. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Christy Vangaasbeek  
Elementary School Counselor



Opposition Written Testimony – HB2420  
House Committee on Education  
Representative Susan Estes, Chair

January 22, 2026  
Susan Willis, Government Liaison  
USD 259 - Wichita Public Schools

Chair Estes and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony on House Bill 2420.

Wichita Public Schools employs support staff – social workers, school psychologists and school counselors – who regularly provide mental health services to students when requested by students or teachers. These services are essential to both the emotional well-being and academic success of our students.

**Key Concerns:**

**1. Delays in Service:**

The bill's requirement for both verbal and written parent consent before providing services could create substantial delays. Many parents are difficult to reach, and delays may limit access to Tier 2 and Tier 3 mental health supports. Delays in intervention may not only exacerbate emotional or behavioral concerns but also negatively impact academic progress.

**2. Questionable Need for Both Verbal and Written Consent:**

It is unclear why both forms are necessary, particularly when verbal consent could allow support staff to respond quickly to urgent student needs. Requiring both could unnecessarily slow access to interventions and create additional administrative burdens without a clear benefit to student safety or well-being.

**3. Confidentiality Conflicts:**

Written consent requirements for purpose, expected timeframe, and plan for services may conflict with professional and legal obligations to maintain student confidentiality, which is only waived in cases of significant risk to self or others, suspected abuse or neglect, or court-ordered mandates. Requiring disclosure beyond these limits may compromise student trust and hinder effective interventions.

**4. Impact on MTSS/Response to Intervention (RTI) Frameworks:**

We use screeners to identify students in need of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. The consent requirements outlined in the bill could limit our ability to provide timely and proactive interventions, forcing a reactive approach to instead. This undermines the MTSS and RTI frameworks we use to support both mental health and academic outcomes.

**5. Practical Implementation Challenges:**

Many routine interventions in our behavior protocols would require parental consent under HB2420. Obtaining consent for each routine intervention for our 45,000 students would be an administrative challenge (to put it lightly), and could create inequities in service delivery, particularly for families who are difficult to contact due to work, homelessness, lack of current phone service, and a multitude of other challenges our families face, 80% of whom live in some level of poverty. Academic MTSS/RTI interventions do not require consent, highlighting a concerning inconsistency.

While we support increased parent involvement in student mental health, HB2420 as written would significantly impede timely, equitable and ethical delivery of critical services in Wichita Public Schools. We urge the Committee to consider the potential unintended consequences on student well-being and academic outcomes and to oppose this bill in its current form.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Regarding Bill HB2420:

My name is Tina Wohler.

Contact information: [wohlert@usd376.com](mailto:wohlert@usd376.com)

Bill HB2420

I am an opponent of the bill.

I am currently a school counselor at Sterling Junior/Senior High School. Previously, I worked with college students. I have over thirty years of experience working with junior high – college age students. I have seen over and over how important it is for students to be able to confidentially approach trusted adults with issues/problems they are struggling with. If school employees, specifically Guidance Counselors and School Counselors, have to refrain from offering services to a student until written and verbal consent is obtained from a parent, students will be at great risk of increased self-harm and suicidality. Many times, issues students are wrestling with involve family members and they have difficulty or feel unsafe talking to them about their issues. This bill will greatly endanger students' mental health and prevent school counselors to provide appropriate care and support. I strongly urge you to oppose this bill as it is currently written.

Date of hearing: Jan. 22 at 1:30pm

**January 22, 2026**

**Testimony to the House Education Committee**

**NAME:** Cassandra Woolworth, constituent

**EMAIL ADDRESS:** Cassie Woolworth

**BILL NUMBER:** HB 2420

**PROPONENT, OPPONENT, or NEUTRAL:** OPPONENT

**ORAL or WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY:** WRITTEN ONLY

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I submit this testimony in opposition to HB 2420 because of its potential impact on student safety.

HB 2420 would require schools to provide both verbal and written parental notification before initiating any school-based mental health service and would impose a \$5,000 fine on individual school employees who fail to meet these requirements.

We already have that.

Kansas law already requires parental consent for ongoing behavioral and mental health services under K.S.A. 72-6287. Current law provides clear guidance to schools while preserving the ability of trained staff to respond when a student's safety or well-being is at risk.

HB 2420 is redundant and unclear. We already have a framework that involves parents while allowing schools to address urgent student needs. This bill risks creating hesitation and delay at moments when timely support is critical.

Adding punitive fines creates a chilling effect for educators, counselors, nurses, and social workers who are acting in good faith to keep students safe. Advocacy organizations including the **Kansas Association of School Boards, Kansas PTA, and Kansas School Nurses Association** have raised **concerns** that this bill could **discourage staff** from intervening **when students are experiencing crisis, trauma, or emotional distress**.

We already have parental involvement. We already have consent requirements. What students need is safe, supportive schools where adults are empowered—not penalized—for responding appropriately when concerns arise.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose HB 2420 and to prioritize student safety and well-being.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony.

Cassandra Woolworth  
Constituent  
Olathe, KS

Jonathan Zimmerman - Kansas Citizen  
121 W Cleveland Ave, PO Box 265  
Sterling, KS 67579  
[jon.zimm@gmail.com](mailto:jon.zimm@gmail.com)  
620-278-6315

Re: HB 2420 Requiring school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing certain school-based mental health services to a student.

Opponent - Written

January 22, 2026 (scheduled)

My name is Jonathan Zimmerman and I am a parent in USD 376. We have an outstanding public school system here in Sterling and across the state as a whole. I graduated valedictorian from Sterling H.S. in 1998 and graduated with honors from Kansas State University in 2002.

I am writing in opposition to this bill because I feel that this bill will undermine the effectiveness of school-based mental health services. School-based mental health services provide an invaluable service for countless children that would otherwise have no access to these services.

Parents are busier than ever and personal budgets are strained at record levels. School-based mental health services are funded and already in place and having access to licensed professionals during the school day is an invaluable benefit for our children. I feel like this bill will put roadblocks in the way of students seeking immediate help with mental health issues that either are suddenly present or that might stem from issues in the home.

Outlined in Section 1(d)(4), this bill would only apply to the tier 2 and 3 levels of the multi-tiered system of supports framework. These two tiers are where the real help takes place with the children. This one-on-one therapy is where our child felt comfortable enough to speak about the sexual abuse he was experiencing at his father's home on weekend visits. At that time he was not comfortable sharing that with his mother or myself for fear of retribution by his father towards himself or us. He was, however, comfortable discussing it with our school's licensed professional who then worked with him to tell us so that legal authorities could be notified. By enacting this bill you will provide some parents a mechanism to keep their children from receiving the care and support that they desperately need.

Sadly, the truth of the matter, in my opinion, lies in parents' responsibility. Even in our case, with constant reassurance of our son's safety in our house, he did not feel he could tell us what he needed to tell us. How many times does this play out every year across Kansas where that support doesn't exist or isn't offered. The professionals we trust our school staff to put in place are there to do a job and do it whenever it is needed. Please let them do their job without adding another layer of red-tape to an already heavily regulated service.

Please do not allow this bill out of committee.

With warm regards,  
Jonathan Zimmerman

Meischa Zimmerman - Kansas citizen  
121 W Cleveland Ave  
Sterling, KS 67579  
[meischa.zimm@gmail.com](mailto:meischa.zimm@gmail.com)  
620-204-0911

Re: HB 2420 Requiring school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing school-based health services to a student.

Opponent - Written

January 22, 2026 (scheduled)

My name is Meischa Zimmerman. I am a mother of 5 children, 2 of which are in public school at Sterling High School in Sterling, Kansas; a Freshman and a Junior. Our two oldest are graduates of SHS and one more that is set to start Kindergarten next year. I'm coming to you as a mother and as an advocate for public education and an advocate for mental health. I don't want to be too long-winded and I don't want you to stop reading out of "blah blah blah" boredom but, I promise you that my testimony is worth reading.

If it weren't for the Interventionist at USD 376, taking the steps needed to do her job - which would have been held up if HB 2420 was introduced and passed at the time - both of my children wouldn't be thriving like they are today. In fact, one probably wouldn't be on this earth with us.

As I mentioned before, I have two kids who attend public school in Sterling, and although we are a small 321A school, our district is full of KSHSAA award-winning teams (basketball and football), athletes (321A girls tennis champion, Chelsie Brown - who went on to Tokyo to compete and medal in the Deafolympics. As well a double's team that medaled in 9th place at State Tennis - half of that team lives at our house). Not to mention our Speech and Debate Team that just won the State Championship last week. We have some amazing students and amazing educators in our district but every single person has something they're dealing with that no one else may know about and that's one reason why there are mental health services offered at our school.

My husband and I chose to homeschool when the 2020-21 school year began because we had a new baby at home, and since we were given the choice, we took that opportunity to do what we felt was best for our family. After our children re-entered school the following year, my daughter saw a sign with small slips of paper next to it on the new "counselor's" door that read: "If you need to talk, write your name on a slip of paper and place it in the envelope." She wrote her name on there, and that one move changed our lives. She was called in and just started talking, and she felt as though it was the safest place to say what she needed to say and get those things off her chest. It turns out that while she was staying with her biological dad during his visitation time, she and her little brother were being mentally and physically abused. My ex knew how to abuse so as to not leave marks and "don't tell mom" was said to those two kids far too many times. My daughter felt comfortable telling the mental health professional what was going on since she wasn't "telling mom". That helped to get her away from him and it helped get her started with a therapist to assist her in healing what needed healed so that she could grow and thrive.

A year and a half passed and my son felt comfortable enough to go to the same individual within the district to tell her that he was being abused in a far worse way at the hands of a friend of his biological dad. Where the family courts failed us by forcing him to continue visits where he was being physically abused, our interventionist did not. Thankfully, my son also felt as though it was safe, he wasn't "telling mom" and okay to tell her instead of me and as it sits now, my son is now healing in a different way through services that started by seeing and having a conversation with the district mental health professional.

When it comes to a child's mental health and well-being, there are things that parents need notified of immediately and I respect the district's policies on when and how we are notified as parents but the part that is most important is that there are policies put in place by the Board of Education and the district, in conjunction with the mental health providers that work with the school, used to notify parents. The purpose of the BOE and administration is to do what's best for each of our students and our students as a whole. HB 2420 is just an example of the Kansas Legislation overstepping and not allowing those who know the job, and have been doing it successfully for quite a long time, to do just that - their job.

In closing, I also feel as though I should mention that there could be dire consequences should there be a delay in critical care to some students due to the threat of - among other things - a fine of \$5,000 if this Bill were to be passed out of committee. This is not a fiscal matter and I don't see this Bill as anything but vague and an example of overreach by not allowing those who have been voted into a specific position - by the members of the communities they serve - to do their job.

Please do not allow this Bill out of committee.

Thank you for your time,  
Meischa Zimmerman