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Educator/Public School Parent  
House Bill 2420 Opposition - Written Testimony Only  
House Committee on Education  
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January 19th, 2026

Chair Estes and House Committee on Education Members:

My name is Thomas Barker and I am writing as an public school educator and parent of a public school student in opposition to House Bill 2420 (HB2420). I have had the privilege to be a public school teacher for the past thirteen years. Having completed my Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Kansas, I choose to work in the K-12 setting instead of further working in higher education. I could rave on for hours about the trials and challenges of being a public school teacher, while also noting many of the successes I have seen. Simply put - I love my job and glad that I have found my calling.

One of the reasons for my opposition to HB2420 is how it defines school-based mental health service. In the bill, school-based mental health service is defined as:

*any program, intervention or strategy applied in a school setting that is specifically designed to influence a student's emotional, behavioral or social functioning.*

This overly broad and vague definition includes many strategies that I use on any given day that I would no longer be able to utilize. An example would be if I told two students, who do not sit next to each other in my classroom, that they could move and sit next to each other for the last 10 minutes of the day if they completed the assignment and did it well. Another example would be if a student was not able to focus and work on the assignment and I have to sit next to them to make sure they do focus and complete the task for that day. These are just two examples of strategies that I could no longer utilize among many others that I have to implement with a single or group of students to modify their behavior that are not universally applied to the whole group of students as in a tier one level of support.

Another reason I stand opposed to this bill is that it limits the services and support students may need throughout the day. Many times at school when there is a conflict between students a mental health support staff may meet with the students to help them work through the issues. When this is done the mental health support staff contacts the students guardians to let them know of the situations and how they worked through to resolve it. Based on this bill the mental health support staff would need to contact the guardians first both in written and direct verbal communication and then obtain a signature allowing them to meet with the students to resolve this conflict. By doing this it puts an unrealistic timeline and burden upon mental health support staff by requiring them to do more paperwork instead of providing services that help students.

While the intent of the HB2420 might not be to hinder these types of strategies within the classroom and the services provided by school mental health support and school staff, the vagueness in how it defines school-based mental health means that it can cover a variety of strategies and process that are utilized to work with a student to help them. These definitions would confuse school staff and not allow us to fully help our students, especially when one considers the monetary penalty for a school staff member who may accidentally violate this.

I hope that you will vote in opposition to this bill.

Thomas Barker, Ph.D.