From: Tonya Bell
To: House Education
Subject: House Bill 2420 - Please Do Not Pass!
Date: Saturday, January 17, 2026 11:15:57 PM

> You don't often get email from tonyacheriebell@gmail.com. Learn why this is important

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,
My name is Tonya Bell, and I am a school counselor in a rural Kansas community.

I am writing to urge you, as strongly as I can, **not** to pass House Bill 2420.

On paper, this bill is framed as a parental rights measure.
In practice, it creates **dangerous delays and barriers** to mental health support for the very students who need it most.

Under this bill, students seeking Tier 2 or Tier 3 mental health support would be required to wait for parental consent before help can begin. That means:

- Students who finally work up the courage to ask for help may be told to wait.
- Early intervention is delayed by paperwork.
- Students who do not feel safe disclosing mental health struggles at home may stop asking altogether.
- Support becomes reactive instead of preventative.

In my role as a counselor, I see firsthand what happens when help is delayed.
When access to support is restricted, **problems do not disappear — they escalate**.

And I want to be very clear:
This legislation does not affect students equally.

In rural communities like mine, we already face limited access to mental health care. Long waitlists. Few providers. Transportation barriers. For many students, the school counselor is the **only** mental health professional they will ever see.

The students most harmed by this bill are those who are already high-risk:

- Students experiencing trauma or abuse
- Students living with family instability
- Students whose families carry mental health stigma
- Students who fear punishment, rejection, or harm if they disclose struggles at home

These are the students who rely on school counselors as a **safe, trusted first point of contact**.

HB 2420 creates blind spots where students fall through the cracks.
It creates delays at moments when timing matters.
And it sends a dangerous message to children:
"Help comes with conditions."

That message does not protect students.
It increases risk.

School counselors are not trying to replace parents. We are not trying to hide information. We are trained professionals, bound by ethical standards, whose role is to support students, involve families when appropriate, and intervene early to prevent crises.

This bill undermines that work.

If your goal is truly student safety, then we must prioritize **access**, **trust**, and **early intervention** — not barriers and delays.

Please listen to the counselors who work with these children every day.
Please listen to the realities of rural schools.
And please, do not pass HB 2420.

Our students' lives and well-being depend on it.

Thank you for your time.