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

Opponent

Written

Thursday, January 22, 2026, 1:30 PM Room 218-N

Dear Chair and members of the House Education Committee

I am writing in opposition to House Bill 2420.

I have spent my career working with young people in schools. As a former school counselor with over 25 years of experience, I have sat with students in moments of fear, shame, confusion, grief, and crisis. I have also watched what happens when students do *not* have a safe adult they can turn to.

Sometimes, counselors and trusted school staff are the **only safe adults** a young person feels able to talk to.

HB 2420 would require parental consent before school staff can provide any individual mental health support outside of a suicide risk assessment. While I understand the intent to involve parents, the real-world impact of this bill would be devastating.

If students know that **any private conversation will automatically trigger contact with their parents**, many will simply stop talking.

They will:

- Stop asking for help
- Stop disclosing anxiety, depression, or distress
- Stop telling adults when they are overwhelmed or afraid

This does not protect students—it **isolates them**.

Many young people avoid talking to parents for very real reasons: fear of punishment, shame, cultural expectations, family stress, lack of understanding, or unsafe home dynamics. School counselors and trusted staff provide a critical bridge—someone who can listen, validate, and help students stabilize enough to take next steps.

Peers cannot replace that role.

Peers may listen, but they **do not have the power, training, or authority** to intervene, connect resources, or ensure safety.

Removing access to trusted adults will not reduce anxiety or suicide risk.

It will **increase it**.

We are already in the midst of a youth mental health crisis. Rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation among young people are at historic highs. This bill would create additional barriers at the very moment when connection is most needed.

I can say without hesitation:

I have saved countless lives because I was allowed to talk to students when they needed it most.

Not after paperwork.

Not after permissions.

In the moment when they finally found the courage to speak.

HB 2420 would make those moments far rarer—and far more dangerous.

Parents are essential partners, and schools already work diligently to involve them when safety is at risk. That system is working. This bill would replace professional judgment with fear, liability, and silence.

Please do not take away one of the last safe spaces many students have.

For the sake of Kansas youth, I urge you to oppose House Bill 2420 and **leave these protections exactly as they are**.

Respectfully,

Cynthia Coufal

Kansas School Counselor

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