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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 only
Thursday, January 22, 2026

Chairman Estes and Members of the Education Committee:

Greetings, I am Cheri Koochel, retired social worker, currently living in Salina. I was a social worker for 34 years, 26 years as a school social worker in Manhattan, KS.

I am opposed to HB 2420 for many reasons. First, the words “any”, “initiate”, “provide” are vague. With the threat of a \$5,000 penalty for every violation the bill needs to further explain those terms.

Secondly, I am grateful for the exception of risk of suicide but what about conversations regarding abuse and/or neglect of a child? Disclosure of CAN often occurs at school and if the alleged perpetrator is a parent/guardian it would not be advisable to contact a parent first.

Is this bill a part of the parent rights agenda? Parents have always had and always will have rights in their child’s education. It does take time and effort, for example, attending P/T conferences, being on the Site Council, PTA, volunteering in the classroom, having a conversation with your child about their day, looking in their backpack, contacting school staff with questions and concerns. What about children’s rights? Their right to feel safe and heard!

I have several real-life examples where this bill would be putting children at risk for further abuse/neglect, would take unnecessary time out of the classroom, would cause the child to experience embarrassment or shame, and would cause professionals, such as school social workers to abandon their Code of Ethics.

Disclosure of sexual/physical abuse when the perpetrator was the father/stepfather/boyfriend.

In class upset/crying and the teacher sends the student to the social worker. Family member/pet died, no food/water/heat at home, no lunch money,

bullying behavior, peer/teacher conflicts, drug/alcohol abuse, domestic violence. In just these few examples, would I need to stop and obtain parental permission? Allow the student to sit where – in their classroom, in the hallway, in the office to continue to cry or tantrum?

What about the many times I would have 5 to 6, usually girls, show up at my office? Contact every parent to get permission? I could spend 10 seconds with some of them and send them back to class but with this bill I could not “initiate” and service.

The attack on the professionalism of school mental health providers needs to stop. Do you lay awake at night and wonder if a student is hungry, safe, provided for? I still do! Once a social worker you are a social worker for life.

I would be happy to discuss this bill or the work of social workers with anyone.

Cheri L. Koochel