

House Bill 2420

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House Bill 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 - Opponent

Written Only

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Thank you education committee. My name is Christa Moore and I have worked in education for 20 years. This is my 14th year as a school counselor in Kansas public schools. I began my career in the Olathe School District and now work for Kansas Connections Academy, a virtual public school in Kansas. The work that school counselors and other mental health professionals in the schools do is vital toward our students' overall wellbeing. Many times students will come to their school counselor or other staff member in need of help and the ability to work with them immediately is of utmost importance. Requiring verbal and written communication under the vague terms of Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions could negatively impact many of our students.

School counselors provide many lessons and activities on skills such as kindness, respect, problem solving, growth mindset, and responsibility in large group, small group, and individual settings. These are life skills needed for students to be successful as they grow. If students are not able to take part in these lessons and activities they are missing out on learning vital skills that they will need throughout school and adulthood. These activities allow us to have a proactive approach to students' social and emotional learning. By requiring written and verbal permission for us to work with students in these ways we become reactive in our approach and find students struggling with concepts or interactions that they could have already learned and processed.

If you have been in education very long, you know that there are many parents and caretakers who do not regularly check for notes or permission slips and getting in touch with someone to get verbal permission on top of that can be very difficult due to many different factors such as work, availability, or even phone access. Waiting on these could cause a delay in our ability to work with students in need which could cause frustration, an increase in students' negative thoughts, behaviors, or attitudes, and a hesitation to reach out to a school official for help when it is needed. We also have to think of the students that are in situations of abuse and neglect.

Many times it is a family member who is the perpetrator in these situations. Students could easily fear asking permission from the ones abusing them or the perpetrator could refuse to give permission so that the abuse is not found out or reported. When school officials are able to use their professional judgement and intervene quickly, students are able to have a more positive outcome than those who are made to wait or are unable to access the services they need.

I oppose House Bill 2420 as it could greatly affect students' ability to get the help and care they need from the school officials that see and work with them on a regular basis and I urge you to do the same.

Thank you for your time and consideration.