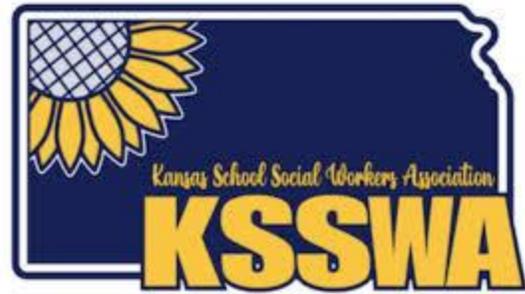


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HB 2420 - Requiring school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing certain school-based mental health services to a student

Opponent - Written only
Thursday, January 22, 2026

Chairman Estes and Members of the Education Committee:

On behalf of the Kansas School Social Workers Association (KSSWA), thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 2420.

As Licensed Master Social Workers and Qualified Mental Health Providers within the school setting, we work daily with students experiencing anxiety, depression, trauma, grief, bullying, family instability, and crisis situations. School-based mental health services are often the first—and sometimes only—point of access for students who need support. HB 2420 would create barriers to timely care for students, increasing the risk of harm rather than strengthening family engagement.

School social workers are trained, licensed professionals bound by ethical standards, state licensure requirements, and district policies. Parents receive appropriate informed consent, and school social workers obtain that consent in alignment with district policies when involvement is appropriate, safe, and beneficial to the student. **Kansas law already provides parental protections** related to student counseling and mental health services.

Under **K.S.A. 72-6287**, schools are required to notify parents and obtain consent for certain non-academic surveys, screenings, and interventions related to mental health and behavior. This statute already strikes a balance between parental rights and student safety by ensuring transparency while allowing schools to respond appropriately to student needs. As a result, **HB 2420 is largely redundant**, duplicating existing law rather than addressing a gap in protections.

In practice, the adoption of this bill in tandem with **K.S.A. 72-6287** is redundant, causes confusion, and increases the risks of students not receiving mental health services through the school setting. A blanket parental consent requirement—without distinction between routine check-ins, crisis de-escalation, or short-term support—undermines professional judgment and may delay critical interventions. For students in crisis, even short delays can have serious consequences for the student, educators, and allies involved, risking the student's physical and psychological safety.

Many students turn to schools for help because they are **accessible, familiar, and trusted spaces**. If students believe that seeking support will automatically require parental consent before services can begin, many will avoid asking for help altogether. This is particularly concerning for students who already lack access to community-based resources such as therapy, case management, or other therapeutic supports. Passage of this bill would further marginalize these students by limiting their access to school-based mental health services. Students living in unsafe, unstable, or unsupportive home environments—precisely those school social workers are trained to protect—would be disproportionately harmed.

Additionally, the introduction of rigid informed consent requirements and punitive fines for mental health professionals will inevitably reduce students' access to critical supports. When mental health services are restricted, schools often see an increase in behavioral challenges and disciplinary referrals—outcomes that run directly counter to student well-being and academic success. Rather than improving transparency, this bill risks adding administrative strain to schools already operating at capacity.

School social workers and mental health professionals are essential to fostering safe, supportive school environments by addressing students' emotional, behavioral, and social needs. Requiring extensive consent procedures—even when parents comply—diverts scarce time and resources away from direct student care. At a time when schools are facing unprecedented mental health demands and severe staffing shortages, this bill would undermine the very supports students need most and weaken schools' ability to respond effectively.

As a School Social Worker, my primary responsibility is to support student well-being, safety, and academic success while partnering with families whenever possible. The framework of existing Kansas law. **K.S.A. 72-6287 already provides appropriate parental safeguards**, and HB 2420 would unnecessarily restrict access to care while offering no clear additional benefit. HB 2420, though likely well-intentioned, would have the unintended consequence of reducing access to care for the students who need it most.

For these reasons, our association respectfully urges the committee to **vote no on House Bill 2420** and **instead** pursue policies that strengthen collaboration between families and schools without creating barriers to student mental health support.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Nowak, LMSW, Acting Legislative Chair/Membership Chair, Kansas School Social Worker Association.