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HB2420 Requiring school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing certain school-based mental health services to a student
Opponent - Written Only
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Hello, Chairperson and Committee. My name is Tabitha Pavlik and I am currently an elementary school counselor in Emporia, KS with USD253. I have been an educator for 21 years and a school counselor for 16 years. As an educator, parent, community member, and a lifelong resident of the state of Kansas, I strongly oppose HB2420 because of the potential impact on the learning environment of all students and society as a whole.

Requiring both verbal and written communication as well as receiving written parental consent prior to helping a student with mental health needs at school takes time and sometimes there are urgent matters to address and a parent cannot be reached. No student is exempt from a potential crisis. I see that the bill makes an exception for a student who may be a suicide risk but what about students who make threats to hurt others or who are in a state of mental health crisis? I advocate for completing a threat assessment for these concerns without immediate parental consent.

Responding to students immediately and teaching them to recognize and manage their emotions in the moment is essential. I interact daily with students handling strong emotions in a manner that requires adult support. Examples include poor social interactions, shutting down or not working, being intentionally hurtful to peers, defying teachers and school rules, disrupting the learning environment, throwing materials and becoming unsafe, and other maladaptive behaviors. Tier 2 and tier 3 mental health services at school are designed for students who are not functioning safely, respectfully, and responsibly with universal tier 1 SEL supports. These students are most at risk for harm to self and others physically, emotionally, and socially.

Finally, mental health is part of an individual's well-being and is woven into every decision and action we as humans make. Limiting mental health services in the school setting for a child in need impacts the learning environment and safety of other students and staff. The lack of access to services for those in need is a danger to society as a whole, as developing appropriate emotional, behavioral, and social functioning skills is imperative to a healthy society.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I can be reached via email for questions.

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