

Sawyer Ptacek
1260 N. Ash
Russell, KS 67665
sawbair@gmail.com
785-223-2964

HB 2420 – Requiring parental consent prior to providing any school-based mental health service to a student.

Opponent - Written only

Monday, January 29, 2026

Members of the Kansas Legislature House Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th Ave
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Members of the House Committee,

My name is Sawyer Ptacek, and I am currently a 7-12 grade school counselor at Russell Jr–Sr High School in Russell, Kansas. Throughout my eight year career as a school counselor, I have served students across all grade levels in multiple Title I schools. During the 2024-2025 school year, I was honored to be named a Kansas Multi-Level School Counselor of the Year and one of four finalists for Kansas School Counselor of the Year.

I am providing testimony in opposition to House Bill 2420 currently under consideration by the Kansas Education House Committee due to the serious and unintended risks it creates for student safety and mental health.

I want to be clear that I fully support parent involvement in their child’s life and academic career. Strong partnerships between schools and families are essential to student success, and involving parents is already a core part of my professional practice. My concern with HB 2420 is not about excluding families, but about delaying support at moments when students need it most.

In my daily work, students rarely walk into my office asking for “Tier 2 or Tier 3 mental health support.” They come in upset about friends, overwhelmed by school, or struggling with stress at home. Trust is built through connection and conversation, not paperwork.

I recall a time when a high school student came into my office crying about a conflict involving a friend. As we talked, I began to notice concerning themes in her thoughts and feelings. After about twenty minutes, I asked if she had ever thought about hurting herself or about suicide. She shared that she had, but had never told anyone before.

Because she felt safe speaking freely, I was able to help her involve her parents and connect her with additional mental health services she urgently needed. That outcome depended entirely on the ability to meet with her immediately, listen without barriers, and follow professional judgment as the conversation unfolded.

Under HB 2420, that interaction could have been delayed or disrupted. The conversation did not begin as a suicide-related discussion, and it likely would never have reached that life-saving disclosure if the student believed help required prior permission or administrative steps. Timing matters in mental health, and hesitation can mean missed warning signs.

Requiring parental consent before providing Tier 2 or Tier 3 support shifts school counselors from proactive professionals to gatekeepers of delayed care. Students who are uncertain, fearful, or unsure how to explain what they are feeling may decide it is safer to say nothing at all. When students disengage from support, concerns do not resolve—they intensify. This legislation would disproportionately affect students already facing trauma, family instability, mental health stigma, or fear of consequences at home.

Being a school counselor is already a difficult and emotionally taxing profession. We face accusations of indoctrinating students, being an excuse to get out of class, and more. Despite this, my primary role is to be a trusted adult—someone who offers help without judgment and stands in a student's corner when they feel no one else will. With existing counselor shortages and high student-to-counselor ratios, HB 2420 risks making the profession less sustainable and undermining recent progress in improving access to student support.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose House Bill 2420. Protecting students means ensuring timely access to trusted, trained adults who can identify concerns early and respond appropriately—while continuing to partner with families whenever possible. This bill, though well-intentioned, would move us further away from that goal.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important issue, as well as your service to the people of Kansas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sawyer Ptacek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sawyer Ptacek
Former K-6 Licensed School Counselor, 4 years
Current 7-12 Licensed School Counselor, 4 years