

HOUSE BILL No. 2420

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HB No. 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: Opposed

Written only

Hearing: 1/22 1:30pm

Thank you, chairwoman and committee. My name is Anne Marie Strobel. I am a School Counselor for Kansas Connections Academy. I have been a school counselor since 2014 and have served in both elementary, middle and high school levels. I've also served within brick and mortar buildings as well as my current position, an online school. Prior to being a school counselor, I was a therapist in a mental health center and saw many children on my caseload. I am also a member of our local school board in Anderson County.

I have many concerns with this bill and how detrimental it could be to students. While many parents would gladly give parental consent for their student to be seen by a counselor, there would be some who would not be willing, due to their lack of understanding of what we provide for their child. Many times, these are the students who are in more need of services. This could lead to many crisis situations, as they would not be receiving regular support for social emotional needs that may not be addressed at home. Additionally, this could create situations where students who are in abusive homes would not have permission to speak to the very persons who could help get them protection and further care.

I would also add that as a school counselor, we often provide classroom lessons on subjects such as respect, kindness, persistence, loyalty as well as social/soft skills. If a student were to not have permission for a counselor to work with them, they would have to leave the classroom during this time, which would be disruptive, and miss out on learning opportunities that they very well may not be learning at home.

I urge you to consider the negative consequences of this bill in relation to our children and how this bill could create a larger gap in students who are emotionally healthy and able to use social skills versus those who are not.

I will stand for questions.