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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

1/22/26 - Hearing Date

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 2420.

I offer this perspective as both a mother of three children (ages 19, 14, and 11) and as a dedicated school counselor. I have served as a counselor at Great Bend High School for ten years, and prior to that, I served as a K-12 counselor in La Crosse. I take great pride in my profession and the work we do to support Kansas students. Currently, I estimate that 75% of my day is dedicated to counseling students regarding their mental health.

I am deeply concerned about the ramifications this bill would have on our students. While I fully respect parental rights and strive for transparency in my work, requiring parental permission prior to having mental health conversations with students could be detrimental.

Unfortunately, there are children in our state who are being abused by their parents or guardians. If counselors are required to obtain permission from a parent before speaking with a student, a child suffering from abuse will effectively be cut off from their most accessible trusted adult. We risk leaving these children vulnerable and isolated because the law would require us to seek permission from the very source of their abuse.

Furthermore, there are significant logistical concerns. I frequently attempt to contact parents regarding grades, attendance, or mental health, only to receive no response. If we are unable to reach a parent, or if a parent is unwilling to be part of the solution, how do we support the child? This bill creates a barrier that prevents us from helping students who are simply looking for support.

When I read this bill, numerous past students came to mind, students I was able to help escape unimaginable situations or guide through significant emotional distress or a simple conversation about a disappointing situation. Under the restrictions of HB 2420, I would not have been able to help those students simply because they lacked a caring adult at home willing to answer the

phone or sign a paper. The thought that Kansas children could lose counselors as a resource is deeply distressing to me. It has made me sick to my stomach for days trying to process this.

Finally, speaking as a parent, I want my own children to have adults they trust and can turn to when they are worried or stressed. Parenting is hard work, and I understand that there are times my children may be upset with me. In those moments, I want them to have timely access to trained professionals who can help them navigate tough times safely.

I urge you to consider the unintended but dangerous consequences of this bill and vote in opposition to HB 2420.

Respectfully,

Rachel Thexton
School Counselor