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Bill number/title: HB 2420 Requiring school districts to obtain parental consent prior to providing certain school-based mental health services to a student.

Position on bill: opponent

Written only testimony

Hearing date: 1/22/2026

Topeka, Kansas

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Hannah Toews, and I am a licensed school psychologist serving students and families in Topeka, Kansas. I am writing in strong opposition to House Bill 2420 because it would significantly undermine schools' ability to support students' academic, behavioral, and emotional needs particularly those of our most vulnerable children.

To understand the harm this bill would cause, it is important to understand how schools support students through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

Tier 1 supports are universal supports provided to all students, such as social-emotional learning instruction, classroom behavior expectations, and schoolwide mental health promotion.

Tier 2 supports are more targeted interventions for students who need additional help, such as small-group counseling, social skills groups, or check-in/check-out systems.

Tier 3 supports are more highly individualized services designed for students with intensive needs.

This tiered approach allows schools to provide students with the right support at the right time, often preventing challenges from escalating into crises. MTSS is proactive, preventative, and evidence-based.

House Bill 2420 would place barriers on Tier 2 school-based mental health supports that are critical to student well-being and school safety. As a school psychologist, my work depends heavily on consistent communication and partnership with families. However, many of the families we serve are living in poverty and are already operating at maximum capacity. Parents may be working night shifts, multiple jobs, or inconsistent hours simply to meet basic needs. Phones are frequently disconnected due to financial strain. Communication challenges are not a lack of care, they are a reflection of systemic stress.

This bill assumes that all families have equal access, time, and resources to engage in immediate and ongoing communication. That assumption is not grounded in reality.

Even more concerning, some of our most vulnerable students (those experiencing abuse, neglect, or instability at home) may lose access to safe, school-based supports altogether. Tier 2 counseling groups often provide the only safe space where these students can express what they are experiencing so that school staff can intervene appropriately and connect them to help.

In education, we work tirelessly to prevent escalation. We teach emotional regulation, coping skills, and social problem-solving before behaviors become dangerous. When those preventative supports are restricted, students do not simply “do better.” They escalate.

I ask you to consider the real-world impact of this bill:

Do you want classrooms where students are flipping desks because they were denied early mental health supports?

Do you want children being physically hurt because schools were prevented from teaching social-emotional skills before behaviors reached a crisis point?

School-based mental health supports are not optional extras. They are essential for learning, safety, and student success. House Bill 2420 would not protect children, it would place them at greater risk.

I urge you to oppose House Bill 2420 and allow educators and school mental health professionals to continue doing what we are trained to do: support students, partner with families, and intervene early so that all children can learn in safe, supportive environments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Hannah Toews, EdS

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