



ALLIANCE FOR A
HEALTHY KANSAS

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April Holman, Executive Director

Alliance for a Healthy Kansas

Email: april@healthykansas.org or 785.251.0919

Oral In-Person Proponent Testimony on HB 2421

House Committee on Education

Chairwoman Estes and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 2421. The Alliance for a Healthy Kansas supports the restriction of cell phone use during school hours in the bill as a practical approach to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Kansas students.

My name is April Holman, and I am the Executive Director of the Alliance for a Healthy Kansas. The Alliance for a Healthy Kansas is nonpartisan health policy advocacy organization working to create an environment where Kansans can reach their highest level of health.

Restricting cell phone usage during school hours reduces bullying and improves overall mental health for students. We see this in a study from Norway finding that middle-school girls whose schools enacted a 3-year smartphone ban reported a 46% reduction in bullying incidents, while boys experienced a 43% reduction. In a study closer to home, the American Psychological Association reports that 41% of teens who spend the most time on social media rate their overall mental health as poor or very poor, while this number decreases to 23% of teens who spend the least amount of time on social media.

In all, 33 states and the District of Columbia have restrictions on cell phone use in schools. This includes Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma. Meanwhile, a patchwork of protections is developing across the state of Kansas as individual schools and school districts enact policies to restrict cell phone use during the school day. The statewide approach in HB 2421 will extend the protection to all Kansas students.

The Alliance for a Healthy Kansas acknowledges that there are important medical and safety reasons why some students may need to have access to cell phones in schools. However, the restriction of general use of cell phones in school is a practical protection that will improve the mental health of Kansas students.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share support for HB 2421. I hope you will reach out to me via email or phone if you have any questions.