

Written PROPONENT testimony for HB 2669 AN ACT Codifying the mental health intervention team program administered by the Kansas department for aging and disability services in state statute.

To: Madam Chair Representative Landwehr and committee members

From: Joyce Aranda, All Saints Catholic School

Date: February 8, 2024

Madam Chair Landwehr and members of the committee,

My name is Joyce Aranda, and I am the Principal at All Saints Catholic School, a Title 1 Catholic School in Wichita. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as a PROPONENT to bill HB 2669.

In my 13 years of being an administrator in a Title 1 Catholic School I have witnessed time and again the importance of having a mental health provider in the building. The support of student learning and overall mental health is crucial for our students. Having EANS the last few years meant that we were able to have mental health support daily in our building. Prior to EANS we only had mental health support one day per week. In my 14 years I have personally had to work with students who are depressed, suicidal, suffer from eating disorders, are cutters and suffer with severe anxiety. Many of our students are dealing with deportation of family members, loss of parent jobs, homelessness, lack of food, parental drug or alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, and food insecurity.

A majority of our students live at or below the poverty line. There is an overwhelming need for our students to receive mental health support. Before EANS, our teachers and administration had to fill that role a lot, none of which are certified to do so.

I could share story after story of how our students have benefited from having mental health services provided through EANS but I want to focus on the necessity of needing them. With the thousands and thousands of dollars available to our schools for supplies, technology, teachers, etc. the priority for us had to be the request for social workers and counselors. We desperately needed and continue to need them to help meet the mental health issues that so many of our students are facing on a daily basis.

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for allowing me to provide support for HB 2669. Please feel free to reach out to me if I can be of assistance to you in this worthy endeavor to protect our children and provide needed services to them. Thank you for your consideration.

Joyce Aranda

Principal
All Saints Catholic School
3313 E. Grand
Wichita, KS 67213
Principal@allsaintswichita.com