



March 18, 2024

**Re: Testimony in Support of Kansas HB 2669 - Mental Health Intervention Team Program Act**

Dear Madam Chair, Molly Baumgardner, Senate Education Committee:

I am the Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas Catholic Schools. The forty-two schools educating almost 14,000 students in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas focus on developing the entire child. For many years, we have worked very hard to welcome and adequately service students with special needs.

With funding always being an obstacle for us to be able to serve the needs of these young people, particularly those with the most severe needs, we continue to apply for available grants, fundraise, and examine every available resource to address this important and dire need. It is for this purpose and on the behalf of the many students we serve who have special needs that I strongly and completely support Kansas House Bill 2669, the Mental Health Intervention Team Program Act. We believe that the proposed Mental Health Intervention Team Program is not only aligned with our core values but also represents a crucial step forward in addressing the mental health needs of our community.

There is somewhat of a misconception that our Catholic schools do not have low-income, special needs, and English Language Learners (ELL)/English as a Second Language (ESL) students in our Catholic schools. Quite to the contrary, our mission impels us to serve all students whatever their needs. During the current 2023-2024 school year, we have 2125 students who qualify for Free and Reduced Lunches. There are 673 ELL/ESL. There are also 590 students who are currently under a Individual Education Plan. There are 2,923 students who are in need of special accommodations and require Title Services. All of these students require counseling services on a regular basis. Although staggering, these numbers do not even reflect our greatest need, which is providing mental health services to those students who suffer with mental health issues.

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The provisions outlined in HB 2669 reflect a thoughtful and comprehensive approach to mental health intervention. The creation of trained Mental Health Intervention Teams, collaboration with law enforcement and emergency services, and public education initiatives are particularly commendable. By supporting HB 2669, we believe we are investing in a program that will provide timely and specialized support to those in need, ultimately creating a safer and more nurturing environment for our students to thrive.

I urge the committee to support Kansas HB 2669 and its vision to provide important mental health interventions for those who need it most. Thank you for considering our testimony and for your dedication to the well-being of our community.

Sincerely,

*Vincent Cascone, Ed.D.*

Dr. Vincent Cascone  
Superintendent of Schools