

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 Molly Baumgardner and members of the Senate Education Committee

From: Geoff Andrews, Superintendent of Schools, Catholic Diocese of Salina

Date: March 18, 2024

Madam Chair Landwehr and members of the committee,

My name is Geoff Andrews, and I am the superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Salina. We have fifteen Catholic schools stretching from Manhattan to Colby. The majority of our schools are in rural communities across our great state. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as a PROPONENT to bill HB 2669.

In my nineteen years of working in education, both public and private, I have seen firsthand the importance of mental health support for our students. Support of mental health and access to professionals in the building is not just a public school issue. All Kansas kids deserve to have their needs met by licensed professionals. Funding from EANS helped immensely over the last few years, however the need has not disappeared. In my almost four years as superintendent, I have sat down with first graders to help them grieve the loss of a classmate in a tragic accident, talked to students about addictions to vaping, comforted 8th graders after the second instance of suicide in their community, and other day to day situations that arise. Our teachers, principals, coaches, and staff do the same thing every single day, and will continue to.

If all of our schools qualified for EANS, then we could have the opportunity to provide this support with licensed professionals. Unfortunately, EANS was very strict on which private schools could accept funds, and then the application process was exhausting.

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.

Geoff Andrews

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoff Andrews", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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