

**House Children & Seniors Committee  
Testimony in Support of HB 2361**

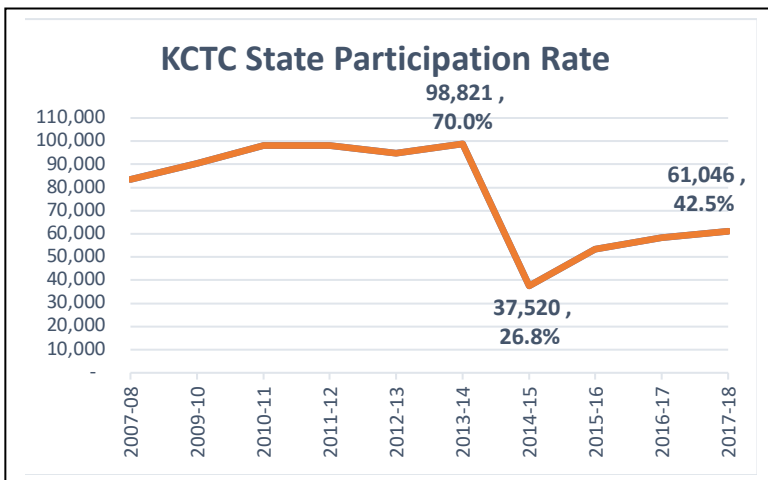
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Chairperson Concannon and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2361, a bill that would change the requirements for administering questionnaires and surveys under the student data privacy act. Passage of HB 2361 could improve participation in the Kansas Communities That Care (KCTC) and other school-based surveys that were impacted by the 2015 legislation. As you can see from the figure below, KCTC participation in 2014 included 70% of all eligible students in the state. After introducing changed opt-in procedures for data collection, participation dropped to 27% in 2015. While participation has been increasing as districts are maneuvering the logistics of opt-in procedures and 2018 rates were just over 42% of all eligible, it is still a struggle. As parents were notified of survey administration during the opt-out procedures, we don't believe the decline is because parents do not want their student to participate, but rather because of the extra logistic and paperwork burden that has been placed on schools and parents. Reducing barriers to data collection will help us better serve Kansas students.



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The KCTC Student Survey is funded by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) and administered by Greenbush. The survey was developed by prevention science

researchers from the University of Washington in the 1980's and has a long history in Kansas, celebrating 25 years of annual administration. The survey is provided at no cost for all public and private schools and focuses on students in 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Results provide a longitudinal picture of student risk and protective factors. While completely anonymous, the KCTC Survey provides schools with district, building, and grade-level measures for behavioral health issues related to substance use, bullying, and school climate.

Requests for survey additions, deletions, or changes are collected and reviewed by a panel made up of state agency partners and interested school district administration every three years. One example, which resulted from growing concern about youth mental health and the rise in suicide, was the addition of an *optional* four-question module to address student mental health in 2016. Questions must be statistically valid and vital to state organizations to be considered. The questions from the optional module are those asked on the Center for Disease Control Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. This was done to ensure that local level data would have state and national comparison.

The optional module regarding student mental health asks about depression, suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts. While this is a difficult topic, best practices in prevention, as supported by the Kansas State Child Death Review Board 2018 Annual Report<sup>1</sup>, encourages asking these questions. Asking youth about suicide does not promote it. In fact, this can open doors for communication that can be a significant deterrent. In 2018, the KCTC Student Survey data showed that 29% of students reported depression symptoms, and 18% reported they considered suicide. Alarmingly, 12% (one in ten) made a suicide plan, and 5% reported attempting suicide<sup>2</sup>. According to a new study from the American Academy of Pediatrics, over half of parents whose child had suicidal thoughts were unaware of these thoughts<sup>3</sup>. In 2018, almost 80% of school districts who participated in the KCTC Student Survey also administered the optional module.

While the KCTC is not a diagnostic tool, it provides a snapshot for school administrators to understand what students are experiencing and provide a resource to inform and guide prevention strategies.

### **Student Safety and Data Anonymity/Confidentiality**

The KCTC Student Survey has a long track record of producing valid and reliable survey results for schools to use for prevention planning for healthy student outcomes. The KCTC Student Survey is voluntary, parents are notified in advance of administration, and it does not collect any personally identifiable information – no names, no identification numbers. In addition, data are only analyzed and reported by groups. To safeguard concerns with small groups, any question or aggregation with less than 20 students or less than 25% of those eligible are not reported.

There is no risk of identifying an individual student.

- The survey is voluntary and does not collect personally identifiable data.
- All data reported as aggregate groups.
- To safeguard concerns with small groups, any question or aggregation with less than 20 students is not reported.

### **Impact of the Passage of House Bill 2361**

Under HB 2361, parents would retain the ability to choose which surveys will or will not be administered to their children, however, it will reduce burden on parents, schools by allowing parents to opt-out rather than requiring everyone to provide written opt-in. Reduction of required paperwork for students, parents, and schools will increase the participation in relevant surveys and provide schools and communities with even more precise data to measure progress toward important physical and mental health outcomes and to guide decision-making.

### **How KCTC Student Survey data are used**

The KCTC Student Survey data supports partnerships designed to assist state, regional and local agencies in prioritizing and measuring the impact of prevention and health initiatives. These include:

- Over 230 Kansas school districts – KCTC data is used for local-level monitoring of bullying prevention efforts, school climate, and assistance with measuring new social-emotional learning standards.
- Children’s Mercy Hospital and The University of Kansas Medical Center
- The University of Kansas Center for Community Health and Development
- Governor’s Behavioral Health Planning Council Prevention Sub-Committee
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration,
- Kansas Partnerships for Success Grantees

- Drug Free Communities (DFC) Grants
- KDADS Kansas Prevention Collaborative Community Initiatives
- KDADS Problem Gambling Task Forces
- KDADS Behavioral Health Indicators Dashboard  
[www.kbhid.org](http://www.kbhid.org)

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lisa Chaney at 620-724-6281.

KCTC Student Survey provides a longitudinal (25-year) trend of the behavioral health and wellness of Kansas adolescents.

- Provided at no cost to all Kansas schools
- Data is reported at district, county, regional and state level
- Online data access
- Provides data for planning and decision-making for multiple partners

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<sup>1</sup> 2018 Kansas State Child Death Review Board Annual Report (2016 data): [www.ag.ks.gov/scdrb](http://www.ag.ks.gov/scdrb)

<sup>2</sup> Kansas Communities That Care Student Survey: [www.kctcdata.org](http://www.kctcdata.org)

<sup>3</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics. 2019. Study: Parents often unaware of adolescents' suicidal thoughts.  
<http://www.aappublications.org/news/2019/01/14/suicide011419>