

House Children & Seniors Committee

February 20, 2019

Written Testimony in Support of HB 2361

HB 2361 – Changing the requirements for surveying youth across the state.

Chairwoman Concannon and members of the House Children and Seniors Committee:

My name is Shana Burgess, I am the Director of Prevention and Community Relations for Johnson County Mental Health Center. On behalf of Johnson County Mental Health Center, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2361.

Over the past 10 years, I have worked in prevention in Kansas focusing on substance abuse prevention, suicide prevention and mental health promotion. I serve on the leadership team for both the Olathe Communities That Care Coalition and the Johnson County Suicide Prevention Coalition and I am a parent in the Blue Valley School District.

We live in a time and a place where resources are limited, priorities are necessary and outcomes are key. Our state has had the opportunity for the past 24 years, to administer the Kansas Communities That Care (KCTC) Student Survey, a research based survey that is reliable and valid, and is provided annually, free of charge, to students throughout our state. This broad survey paints a picture of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, prosocial and antisocial behavior, along with key mental health indicators such as depression and suicide risk among Kansas youth. Identified trends through analysis of this self-report data by 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students can help schools, districts and communities be more proactive, rather than reactive, in addressing adolescent health.

Information derived from this survey is imperative in appropriately allocating limited resources in order to make the biggest impact in the health and safety of youth across our state and in our local communities.

**History of KCTC Participation in Johnson County**

In Johnson County, schools, parents and the community have been highly invested in utilizing information gathered from the KCTC Student Survey to shape strategies to support children and families throughout our community. From 2010-2014, Johnson County KCTC Student Survey participation rates averaged **79%** with all six public school districts along with many private schools taking the survey. As a result of passing the Student Data Privacy Act, County participation rates have plummeted to an average of **37%** participation over the past three years.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
County	Johnson County	Johnson County	Johnson County	Johnson County	Johnson County	Johnson County	Johnson County	Johnson County	Johnson County
Participation Rate	75.62	77.28	81.22	79.76	79.58	0.08	38.15	35.82	36.79

Best practices in survey research indicate that 60% participation is acceptable for planning purposes and 80% participation is optimal for evaluation as it is generalizable to the population at this level. As participation rates decline at the state and local level it is a fear and possibility that buy-in and confidence in the data will diminish, putting in jeopardy a longstanding data source with historical comparatives, dating back to 1995.

### **Data Driven Decisions**

Higher rates of participation equal better data, which leads to tailored strategies that positively impact the health of our children and our communities. The KCTC Student Survey provides data for assessment, planning and measurement of initiatives prioritized in order to make the most significant positive impact in our community. Good data can help communities rally behind a shared vision, common goals and streamline approaches to most appropriately and most effectively utilize limited resources to make the biggest impact for the public good.

### **Opportunities with the Passage of HB 2361**

Changing the requirements to administer surveys like the KCTC Student Survey, which is voluntary, does not collect personally identifiable data, and is reported in aggregate groups will reduce the unnecessary burden to schools and families by allowing parents to opt-out rather than opt-in. My hope is for this change to help to restore levels of participation across our state to match or exceed rates prior to 2015. This relevant data will guide decisions, create buy in and promote collaboration around clearly identified priorities specific to local communities.

*"People without information cannot act. People with information cannot help but act." - Ken Blanchard*

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my perspective and I appreciate your consideration of this change.