

TOPEKA-SHAWNEE COUNTY ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Written Testimony for House Children & Seniors Committee
February 20, 2019
Testimony in Support of HB 2361

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

On behalf of the Topeka-Shawnee Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Council, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB 2361. This bill addresses an issue that impacts our member agencies. Comprehensive and reliable data is a critical for agencies who are dedicated to reducing youth substance use rates and other problem behaviors. Since 1995, the state of Kansas has supported through Federal funding the Kansas Communities That Care Survey. This survey has allowed school districts and community agencies to assess substance abuse usage rates for 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th graders and has provided data that is used to make appropriate prevention programming decisions.

As you are aware, the law changed parental consent from “passive consent” to “active consent” in 2014. As a result, rather requiring parents to indicate they “don’t want their student to participate in the survey, it requires parents to indicate they “do” want their student to participate. This law has created a logistical challenge for schools to achieve the participation rate Shawnee County had for years. This process proved to be so cumbersome the first year it was enacted, many school districts either chose not to participate or had such low participation rates that the data was not valid.

Until 2014, the participation rates for Shawnee County schools averaged 80% or more. With the passage of the Kansas Student Privacy Act, participation rates significantly declined. Shawnee County’s participation rate dropped from 80% in 2014 to 52% in 2018.

Why is this important? The Kansas Communities That Care provides critical data for schools to learn substance use patterns of their students; it informs programmatic decisions; and it allows Kansans to evaluate trends and needs for the future. In addition, it provides critical data for agencies including Boys and Girls Club, Kansas Children’s Service League, Shawnee Regional Prevention and Recovery Services, Kansas Action for Children and many others throughout the state that use this data for grant and evaluation purposes.

HB 2361 will assure that participation rates will increase, and reliable data will be available statewide.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Max Wilson
Grant Review Chair
Topeka-Shawnee County Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Council

