

February 19, 2020

Re: HB 2582, neutral
House K-12 Budget Committee

Chairwoman Williams and Members of the House K-12 Budget Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to HB 2582, which would create the behavioral health intervention weighting. The Mental Health Intervention Team Program Pilot (MHIT) has been piloted in Topeka Public Schools since the Fall of 2018. We are fortunate to have 8 full time liaisons serving our most needy students and their families. From August to December, 2019, we saw the following improvements:

- 68% of students with attendance issues have improved
- 74% of students with externalizing behavior have improved
- 59% of students with internalizing behavior have improved
- and, 61% of students with issues in academics/engagement have improved.

The MHIT Liaisons work with students, train staff, assess crises, and provide referrals to therapy and case management as needed. Through additional CMHC funding, Liaisons are able to refer every student with mental health issues, without worrying about their ability to pay. Therapy and case management are also provided directly in schools, meaning that students can attend appointments and return to instruction without delay.

Topeka Public Schools supports the Governor's recommended funding of MHIT, included in the Governor's proposed budget (HB 2597), which appears to offer the most financial support and incentive to school districts and Community Mental Health Centers to partner and support student mental health. Although HB 2582 includes funding formulas to sustain the program, it reduces school funding by 50%, while also reducing community mental health dollars that fund under and uninsured student care.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Dr. Tiffany Anderson, Superintendent, Topeka Public Schools, USD 501
Dr. Scott Mickelsen, School Board President, Topeka Public Schools, USD 501