



**Written neutral testimony before the  
House Committee on K-12 Education Budget**

on

**HB 2582**, creating the behavioral health intervention weighting as part of the Kansas school equity and enhancement act.

**By Leah Fliter, Advocacy and Outreach Specialist**

**Kansas Association of School Boards**

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Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

KASB appears as neutral today on **HB 2582**. Our legislative policy positions, affirmed by our Delegate Assembly in December 2019, state our support for expanding measures to address student mental health issues:

- **High-risk students.** Evaluate necessary funding levels for high-risk students (including but not limited to foster care, trauma, homeless, crisis and mental health issues) and consider additional weighting factors or aid programs.

And

- **Social and emotional issues.** Ensure adequate number of school counselors, social workers, and psychologists to address social and emotional issues.
- **School and community health and social services.** Support further initiatives in addressing student social, mental and physical health needs, in both school and community settings, including a sustained and dedicated funding stream to promote evidence-based programs that address social, physical and emotional needs for all Kansas students.

Additionally, several of our members are participating in the school mental health pilot program established by the 2018 Legislature, are reporting positive results, and would certainly support the expansion of the pilot.

We would also note the provision in Governor Kelly's budget for KSDE a total of \$12.6 million in funding for the pilot program. The budget, which we supported conceptually in testimony earlier this week, also gives school districts additional flexibility in addressing mental health issues by authorizing them to not only contract with Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) but also with nonprofit substance abuse providers, the safety net clinic system or any other providers deemed qualified by the Kansas State Department of Education. There would be no out-of-pocket costs to participating students or their families, and districts would be authorized to enter into the necessary memoranda of understanding established in the pilot program. The budget provision differs from the weighting envisioned in this bill

because it is envisioned as a matching grant program, with the state providing \$3 for every dollar furnished by participating school districts.

We appreciate the additional flexibility for school districts provided by the Governor's budget language and the fact that it provides increased support for what is widely agreed to be a quality program. We also appreciate and acknowledge HB 2582's goal of providing additional resources. We appear today as neutral on the bill because we don't have specific policy direction from our members on the best way to increase student mental health funding. We urge the legislature to continue to work with all interested stakeholders to accomplish the shared goal of supporting students.