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KANSAS NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION / 715 SW 10TH AVENUE / TOPEKA, KANSAS 66612-1686

Mark Desetti  
House K-12 Education Budget Committee  
House Bill 2582  
February 19, 2020

Madame Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 2582.

We stand today in support of House Bill 2582 because we firmly believe that it is in the best interests of our schools, communities, and society to provide real support to those who are suffering from behavioral or mental health issues.

We have seen too many instances of child and teen suicide to not support this effort. And we know that left unaddressed, the issues faced by teens turn into issues throughout their lives. We have a suicide epidemic not just among teens but among young adults. We have increasing suicides among our soldiers, our police officers, and our farmers. Here in Kansas, someone dies by suicide every 20 hours. It is an epidemic.

Early intervention is critical. Cooperative efforts between school districts and community mental health centers can go a long way in providing much needed support to our students. Providing funds to support those efforts would be money well spent.

While we think this is a good bill, there is one section, we would ask you to revisit and possibly amend. On page 2, lines 17 – 25, the bill lists a priority order in which students would receive services. While we understand that this order is to ensure that those students who are likely to need support get the support they need, we believe it might be more appropriate to leave to the mental health experts working in these cooperative agreements to determine which students are their priorities. A child who does not meet the first two priority levels might be showing signs of trauma or suicidal ideation. We want to make sure the mental health professionals are able to prioritize that child.

Please consider adopting HB 2582 favorably.