

Stuart J. Little, Ph.D.
Little Government Relations, LLC

House Education Committee

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2099

February 13, 2015

Chairman Highland and Members of the Committee,

My name is Stuart Little and I am appearing today in support of House Bill 2099 on behalf of the Kansas Association of Addiction Professionals (KAAP). KAAP is the state's largest trade association devoted solely to substance use disorder treatment providers and prevention programs from across Kansas.

The provisions of the current student data privacy law require prior parental consent to administer the Communities That Care (CTC) survey. Other speakers will provide the detailed information regarding the CTC survey and its uses. House Bill 2099 would clarify in law that the Communities That Care survey can be administered without prior parental consent. Prior parental consent has diminished the participation in the survey due to school districts dropping the survey and unable to secure prior consent.

House Bill 2099 is a public policy issue separate from most of your recent discussions about protecting individually identifiable student data. The survey does not collect individually identifiable student data: it is anonymous, voluntary, and confidential. If there was a security breach at any level, there is no data identifiable to a student. Virtually everything you all have discussed about student data is not related to this topic because no individually identifiable data is collected or retained. This data is not used for or connected to state curriculum standards.

We support House Bill 2099 not because it is a means to "chase money" and employ people. The survey is important because taxpayers, legislators, and state agencies expect those dollars spent to be spent with accountability in data-driven, best practices. The survey is a mechanism that does all the things legislators ask for: spend money where it is needed; fund programs that work; don't fund programs that are not effective. The Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services, the Kansas Department of Corrections, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, local school districts, local community mental health centers, local treatment programs, local law enforcement, local prevention programs need this data to do the things you ask them to do and evaluate programs and most effectively target resources. These groups use the survey data to determine what programs need funding, what should be cut, and where services should go in the future.

Some may be concerned about some of the questions asked on the survey. As a parent, that is understandable. The data collected that is not individually identifiable provides the most accurate picture of our youth and behaviors. We can ignore the truth in data and spend money without any measurements and plans, or we can use this survey and non-identifiable data and spend our limited resources wisely.

If Senate Bill 367 were never passed, you may have never heard of the Communities That Care survey. It's a part of the system state agencies and local programs use to spend taxpayer money wisely and make sure taxpayers get what they pay for. That scientific accountability is what you demand from everyone in budgets and programming. That is gone now. You can fix it with the passage of House Bill 2099.

I would be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.