

**Written PROPONENT testimony for HB 2669 AN ACT Codifying the mental health intervention team program administered by the Kansas department for aging and disability services in state statute.**

To: Madam Chair Representative Landwehr and committee members

From: Michelle Mead- St. Mary Catholic School-Diocese of Dodge City

Date: February 8, 2024

Madam Chair Landwehr and members of the committee,

My name is Michelle Mead and I am the principal of St. Mary's Catholic School in Dodge City. Nearly 50% of our students qualify and receive free/reduced lunches. Our ESOL population is approximately 85%.

**Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as a PROPONENT to HB 2669.**

Prior to the availability of EANS funding, our school was not able to provide a setting for social and emotional learning to take place. With this funding we have had the opportunity for our students to participate in a weekly class called Kids in Motion. This provides our students with a safe place to discuss their emotions and learn how to self-regulate. **The funds allowed us to hire a school counselor.** She has monthly themes to work with our students, a few are these are:

1. Daily Affirmations
2. Uplifting letters to peers
3. Respect/Responsibility
4. Self-Regulating through Yoga, deep breathing, and the 5-finger method for calmness

We are blessed that Ms. Martin as our counselor is in our building one a day week to provide one on one time with students who have been either referred by their parents or my staff. I have observed that these sessions are truly meaningful to students and have a large impact in assisting students with their struggles. These have included discussions about recent traumatic events such as a parent separation, divorce, physical altercations. **Ms. Martin was crucial to us when we had a student who had a plan to act on suicidal thoughts, she stepped right in and assisted me referring both her and her family to the appropriate service center.**

She has our younger students share their emotions through art and play. Without the assistance of a counselor, many of our students would not be as stable as they are.

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee, for allowing me to provide support for HB 2669. Please feel free to reach out to me if I can be of assistance to you in this worthy endeavor to protect our children and provide needed services to them. Thank you for your consideration.

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