

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 Senator Molly Baumgardner and Senate Education Committee members

From: Jessica Rose, All Saints Catholic School

Date: March 18, 2024

Madam Chair Baumgardner and members of the committee,

My name is Jessica Rose, and I am a classroom teacher in Title 1 Catholic Schools in Wichita. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony as a PROPONENT to bill HB 2669.

In my 10 years of teaching in Title 1 Catholic Schools I have seen time and again how having a mental health provider in the building supports student learning and overall mental health. Having EANS the last few years meant that we were able to have mental health support daily in our building. Prior to EANS we only had mental health support a few times a week. I have had students who are suicidal, anorexic, cutters. Some are dealing with deportation of family members, loss of parent jobs, homelessness, lack of food, parental drug or alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, and food insecurity. Most of our students live at or below the poverty line. I am not qualified to be their mental health support. Before EANS, our teachers and administration had to fill that role a lot.

One of my students wasn't turning in work, wasn't working in class, and was being defiant. After a month of mental health support from our school counselor things began to change. She started smiling more, work was being turned in. After a few months of support she was a totally different child. She was communicative in class, often smiling and joking. Work was completed daily. Her grades went up and she was experiencing success that had not been seen in any of her years in the school.

Another example is a student of mine who found her father dead while her mother was at work. She called 911 and she and her siblings talked to EMS and tried to revive him. After his death their mother was trying to do the best she could as a single parent with three children. Thankfully she was able to see the social worker and therapist that EANS money provided. Through this service she was able to work through her trauma and grief.

Every year of my teaching career I have had students who are suicidal. Prior to EANS these students were reliant upon their parents to get them to a counselor. I would like to say that this happened in most cases. The opposite is true. For many of my suicidal students the parents never followed up with mental health care. It's not that the parents don't want to; it's that for some of them they are working two or three jobs. Some of them are undocumented residents

and are afraid of what might happen; some don't have health care coverage. However, when the mental health provider is in the school building almost all parents agree to follow up care.

Losing EANS money means losing that support for our students.

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.

Jessica Rose

5th grade teacher
All Saints Catholic School
3313 E. Grand
Wichita, KS 67213
jrose@allsaintswichita.com