



United Community Services of Johnson County

Date: February 19, 2019

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Julie K. Brewer, Executive Director
United Community Services of Johnson County
12351 W. 96th, Ter., Ste. 200
Lenexa, KS 66215

Dear Chairwoman Concannon and members of the House Children and Seniors Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to **testify in support of HB 2361 which would provide access to valuable de-identified student data**. United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) is a nonprofit agency that provides research and data analysis, leads collaborative planning, and mobilizes resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services in Johnson County and the surrounding region.

The use of de-identified data has long played a vital role in researching, analyzing and responding to issues and trends that impact the health and well-being of our community. Throughout its long history, local and state policymakers, law enforcement, funders, and public and private sector health and human service agencies have asked UCS to collect and analyze such data to ensure timely development of programs, interventions and policies that are responsive to the needs in our community.

The creation of the student data privacy act in 2014 limited access, collection and use of de-identified student data. Additionally, it created a new and burdensome requirement of all families to opt-in to de-identified data collection. As a result, a valuable method for early identification and intervention for children and youth needs became more limited.

One of limitations of the student data privacy act is the impact it had on a school's ability to conduct the annual **Kansas Communities That Care Student Survey**. This survey enabled schools to track teen use of harmful substances such as alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, in addition to their perceptions about school and community involvement, and bullying. The survey also provided a baseline for teen participation in, perception of, and attitudes toward both pro-social and anti-social behavior at the peer, school, family and community levels. This statewide survey was initiated in the late 1990s and has been used to guide policy and programming decisions related to substance abuse, juvenile justice, and other areas. Communities That Care survey data indicates areas of greatest need, and long-term trends can help measure what has been effective.

Due to the student data privacy act, some school districts no longer participate in the Communities That Care Survey, and those that do participate now experience low rates of participation.

The Drug and Alcoholism Council (DAC), which UCS facilitates, makes the funding recommendations regarding expenditures of alcohol tax dollars which are generally returned to local jurisdictions from which the taxes are generated in accordance with KSA §79-41a04 as amended. The DAC has relied on results from student surveys, particularly the Communities That Care Survey, to inform programmatic requests through its Alcohol Tax Fund Grant process. Since the 2014 student data privacy act, availability and use of Communities That Care survey data has been severely limited.

Allowing access to de-identified data preserves the rights and privacy of the individual while equipping schools, policymakers, and related organizations with the tools to make well informed decisions.