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Written Testimony

Kansas State Legislature
K-12 Education Budget Committee
HB 2582 Behavioral Health Intervention Weighting

Submitted by:
Rob Scheib, Asst. Superintendent for Business
Dr. Allison Anderson-Harder, Executive Director of Special Services

On behalf of our school district we are presenting testimony regarding the need for new behavioral health intervention weighting administered through an established behavioral health intervention team program. Emporia Public Schools has a growing behavioral health student population adding budgetary pressure to the existing special education program as they are assessed for extreme behavioral needs. We have experienced a marked increase of behavioral needs in regular education students from the time they enter as kindergartners and in our pre-kindergarten program. The K-12 referrals for significant behavior for prior two years and current year to date:

- 2017-2018 - 15 Students
- 2018-2019 – 30 Students
- 2019-2020 (as of today) – 25 Students

Emporia Public Schools provides school wide access to counselors, social workers, and psychologists through the student support specialist program found in each attendance center. This program provides additional behavioral health intervention through collaboration with Crosswinds Mental Health Services in Emporia. Crosswinds shares three full time staff in three of our most high needs buildings, but more service is needed as the numbers of students in need of behavioral health intervention compounds.

We are proud of our commitment to funding school wide, inclusive and alternative core behavioral interventions and programs that work for our local students. HB 2582 would supply the district with targeted assistance for the growing number of students with significant behavioral needs that do not qualify for special education and limited existing programs are not enough. Behavioral health needs is putting an incredible strain on regular and special education resources. We need resources that address students’ behavioral challenges and should be able to focus on students, not whether their needs fall in regular or special education. This weighting would allow us to do that.