



House K-12 Budget Committee

Neutral Written Only Testimony

on

HB 2582

by

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Wichita Public Schools 259

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Madam Chair, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to HB 2582, establishing a new weighting for the Mental Health Intervention Team. As one of the original members of the Mental Health Intervention Team (MHIT) Pilot program, we played an instrumental role in the development and implementation of the program. We support the program without hesitation! This program has been a lifesaver to so many students who were in crisis and who may still be in crisis. Currently we have 21 Intervention Teams, 21 School Liaisons serving 22 schools. In the Wichita Public School District since the program's inception we have seen:

- 1,370 students referred (15,387 Total Pilot Schools Enrollment)
- 737 students served
- 67% of the students served in the program have improved Attendance
- 70% of the students served in the program have improved Behavior
- 53% of the students served in the program have improved Academic Performance

As you can see by the data the program is working!

The validity of the program is not in question, what is in question is the funding of the program. When the subject of addressing the needs of kids in Foster Care, we were invited to the table. At the table with other School Districts, Mental Health Centers and Legislators, we collaborated together to develop this program to address the needs of our most neediest students, together we developed a budget, together we developed the goals and roll out of the program, and who needed to be added/invited to the table to join us. But sense this great collaborative effort to start the program, the communication and collaboration has decreased drastically. We started the program with 100% funding for district School Liaison positions. Last year without any discussion nor collaboration that funding was reduced to the pilot schools by 25%. There was no opportunity for

input to the introduction of the proposal. What was shared with schools when they asked about the reduction in funding, was that “schools needed to have skin in the game.” We can assure you that we have “skin in the game”, the 737 students in the program are our “skin in the game”, and the additional 633 students who did not qualify or were unable to get into the program are our “skin in the game.” The \$400,000.00 payment that we had to make into this program without discussion is just additional “skin in the game”, and the increase to \$800,000.00 with this new proposed 50% weighting is even more “skin in the game”, and let’s be honest, it’s “skin in the game” that could be going to help the other students who are waiting to get into the program, or who just need additional support.

Wichita Public Schools supports the Governor’s recommended funding of MHIT, included in the Governor’s proposed budget, which allows for the continuation of the program and adds additional funding for expansion of the program without penalizing or increasing the cost to existing districts in the program. The need for this program is real, but we do not believe that after just 2.5 years it is ready to go state wide nor to be added into the school funding formula. There are just too many unknowns! We encourage the return to transparent collaboration between the Legislature, School Districts, KSDE, and other Executive branch agencies and the Mental Health Centers to enhance and improve this great program before implementing state wide.

We are 100% supportive of the continuation of this program. We do not believe all the components for an effective weighting for the Mental Health Intervention Team have been identified.