

Senate Education Committee

Thursday, March 14, 2024 - 2:00 P.M.

TESTIMONY ON: All Subjects

Written Testimony

Name (First & Last)	Subject	Manner Testifying	Representing Company/Organization	City	For / Against	Wish to Testify	District #
Marji Bass	H 684	IP	self	Garden City	For	Y	16

My name is Marji Bass. I am a retired high school teacher and grade school and middle school counselor having worked with children from k-12. My experiences in both the classroom and the counselor's office give me a view which not many people have. I support House bill 684 for providing Behavioral tele-health services to our students.

We all know the purpose of school. Yes, academics, reading writing and arithmetic, are the ultimate goals. We want educated students preparing to be functioning, contributing adults. At the same time our schools are often the safety zone for children. Schools have caring, educated professionals who are also there to protect and nurture children. The ability to learn can only occur when the child is mentally able to focus.

As a counselor I found myself working to support not only children, but families as they reached out for help. Think back on what it was like for you to sort through these confusing, ever-changing emotions as you tried to figure out friendships, family dynamics, academic struggles, and adolescence. Perhaps you didn't have the additional complications of physical or mental issues, family death, incarceration, financial strains, educational struggles, or abuse.

Contrary to many people's vision of the school counselor role, it is not to provide individual on-going therapy or counseling sessions to a student. Rather, we are to help the student and family, by finding resources as needed. The counselor listens, supports both the child and family and may come up with plans to assist at school. In my time as a counselor we would have 400 plus students in our school or caseload. I did make recommendations and gave references for outside counseling.

Families are busy, if we can provide support without adding strain to their already stressful lives by offering individual tele-health counseling at our schools let's do so. This is an opportunity to help our families and children should they choose. HB 684 deserves a yes vote.