

KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

An Organization Dedicated to Improving the Lives of Kansans with Mental Illnesses

Testimony presented to the House Health and Human Services Committee Support HB 2260

Amy A. Campbell – February 6, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to address your committee today on behalf of the Kansas Mental Health Coalition (KMHC). KMHC is pleased to support HB 2260 to improve the medical student loan repayment program to encourage psychiatrists to graduate and practice in Kansas.

Kansans access to psychiatrists plummeted after private psychiatric institutions closed or left the state, the Menninger Clinic moved to Texas in 2003. The shortage of psychiatrists in our state has been well known for years – but in recent years, this shortage has become dire – beyond the frontier and rural areas to expand statewide.

The key language to HB 2260 is on page 2:

(f) Subject to appropriations, the university of Kansas school of medicine shall enter into medical student loan agreements with ~~six~~ up to 12 individuals who commit to satisfy obligations to engage in the full-time practice of medicine and surgery in a service commitment area by:

(1) Serving as a full-time faculty member of the university of Kansas school of medicine in general psychiatry or child psychiatry pursuant to K.S.A. 76-384(c), and amendments thereto; or

(2) performing at least 100 hours per month of on-site mental ~~health care~~ *healthcare* pursuant to K.S.A. 76-384(d), and amendments thereto.

(g) For any student who has entered into a medical student loan agreement pursuant to the medical student loan act, the university of Kansas school of medicine shall not prohibit or otherwise create any substantial impediment to such student switching between approved postgraduate residency training programs

KSA 76-384(d) states:

(d) A person may satisfy the obligation to engage in the full-time practice of medicine and surgery in a service commitment area by performing at least 100 hours per month of on-site primary care or mental health care at a medical facility operated by a local health department or nonprofit organization in this state serving medically indigent persons or at a community mental health center or at Larned state hospital, Osawatomie state hospital or any facility that provides mental health services and that is operated by a state agency. As used in this subsection, "medically indigent" means a person: (1) Who is unable to secure health care because of inability to pay for all or a part of the costs thereof due to inadequate personal resources, being uninsured, being underinsured, being ineligible for governmental health benefits; or (2) who is eligible for governmental benefits but is unable to obtain medical services; and "primary care" means general pediatrics, general internal medicine, family medicine and family practice.

Workforce

Mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers face serious workforce challenges that were made substantially worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. The State of Kansas must consider action to expand our workforce and fully compensate those who are providing these services, whether they are clinical professionals, peers, mental health technicians, case managers, or others. We recommend the Legislature investigate potential partnerships with additional educational institutions to build this workforce at multiple clinical levels, and create career pathways to bring Kansans into mental health careers, including revitalizing certified mental health technician training programs. We must also assure that mental health and substance use treatment careers provide living wages and benefits.

The Coalition commends the Legislature and the Kansas Department on Aging and Disability Services for the ongoing efforts to improve mental health and substance use treatment access in Kansas. The mental health crisis is a national issue, but it has hit Kansas hard – with suicide rates and opioid issues putting our State near the bottom of many recent reports. So, the work of the Special Committee on Mental Health Modernization and Reform Committee and the Special Committee on Mental Health Beds is right on time.

Thank you for your consideration.

For More Information, Contact:

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The Kansas Mental Health Coalition is dedicated to improving the lives of Kansans living with Mental Illnesses and Severe Emotional Disorders. We are consumer and family advocates, provider associations, direct services providers, non-profit and for-profit entities and others who share a common mission. At monthly roundtable meetings, participants develop and track a consensus agenda that provides the basis for legislative advocacy efforts each year.
