



Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
SB 217

March 7, 2013

Madame Chair and members of the Committee thank you for allowing me the time to speak in opposition of Senate Bill 217.

My name is Glea Ashley; I am the CEO for Valeo Behavioral Health Care in Topeka, Kansas. With me is Gary Lee, the Chief of Recovery Services for Valeo. We serve the adult population and have both mental health and substance use disorder programs. We serve over 7,100 consumers on an annual basis and approximately 60% of them have a co-occurring disorder. We pride ourselves on the long term-highly qualified staff we have at Valeo. However, they are highly qualified and skilled in their own discipline. The staff at Valeo have respect for the different skills and education it takes to help a consumer who has an addiction disorder verses a mental illness.

Valeo's staff work as partners to treat the individual base on primary diagnosis. Many times if the individual has a dual diagnosis, they need to focus on intensive substance use disorder treatment before they begin addressing the mental health issues. This takes very skilled and focused treatment provided by an educated Addiction Counselor.

The addiction field currently has a body of knowledge that is directly tied to licensure and service provision by all licensed addiction counselors. This body of knowledge is currently protected by the requirement to test and ensures that the

highest quality of care is being provided by a well-trained addiction staff. This bill essentially states that the educational requirements have been met which is all that is needed. Testing is an objective measure of the knowledge base associated with licensed addiction counselors and those wishing to become licensed addiction counselors. This knowledge base will be eroded without testing as a requirement for licensure.

Kansas is in good company. Many states require separate licensure or additional training requirements to treat addictive disorders. For example, the State of Kansas requires additional training and supervision to treat gambling addiction above and beyond the license.

On Monday, I observed firsthand the difference in treatment methods between addictions and mental health. We had 2 gentlemen in our lobby. One was having a mental health issue and the other was very strung out on some type of substance. I watched as the Therapist and Addiction Counselor worked separately with these two individuals. It was taking a different set of skills to work with the different individuals. This is where the intensive training for each discipline comes in. Both individuals ended up getting what they needed, but I have to question whether or not the individual with the substance use disorder would have agreed to treatment without the skills that our Addiction Counselor displayed. This is due to the required training to become licensed in the Addiction field.

Valeo is currently working to integrate primary care on site at our Center. I would not see a medical staff person treating an individual with mental illness or substance abuse disorder or vice versa. It takes long hours of specialized training to provide mental health, substance abuse, or medical services. All are desperately needed to treat the whole individual, but they need to treat what they are specialized in and not dilute down the care for the individual.

I firmly believe that at Valeo we provide highly skilled services in both mental health and substance use; and soon to be primary care. I am asking that you please oppose SB 217 and allow our consumers to continue to get the highly skilled and trained services that they very much deserve.

Thank you for your time.