

State of Kansas
House of Representatives

State Capitol
Topeka, Kansas 66612
(785) 296-7677
Toll Free: 1-800-432-3924
susan.concannon@house.ks.gov



921 North Mill Street
Beloit, Kansas 67420
(785) 738-8087
sconcannon@nckcn.com

Susan Concannon
Representative, 107th District

To: Appropriations
From: Representative Susan Concannon
Date: March 12, 2018
Re: HB 2688; establishing a behavioral health task force

Chairman Waymaster and members of the Committee,

I am here today to testify in support of HB 2688, a bill establishing a behavioral health task force to study the behavioral health system in the state of Kansas. After years of restructuring and cuts in funding, I think we can all agree the mental health system in our state is suffering, if not in crisis.

The Mental Health Task Force established in 2017 was a wonderful first step towards healing our state. The task force studied the strengths and weaknesses of the current mental health system and made recommendations for improvements. A few weeks ago, their report was presented to this committee. We all agreed they were very thorough and provided valuable recommendations.

So, where do we begin with these recommendations? Questions arose from the committee regarding prioritizing and implementation. The report needs a structured follow through; otherwise it will be filed away in a drawer to be pulled out when we find a pocket of money to direct toward mental health. This would be a helter skelter approach to finding solutions. I believe we need a strategic plan.

We currently have various groups working on various topics within mental health and this would not replace their efforts, but tie it all together. This bill is necessary to bring together legislators from both the House and Senate, as well as agency experts and behavioral health stakeholders to create a systematic approach to tackling these issues.

It will be a daunting chore to address the needs of the behavioral health of Kansas. We have opioids, privatization, regional hospitalization, housing, increasing teen suicide rates, and KanCare issues, just to name a few of the broad topics to address. I ask you to consider HB 2688 to create an organized, structured, comprehensive approach to progress in the behavioral health system in Kansas.