

KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

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

Testimony presented to the Appropriations Committee Re: HB 2688 – March 12, 2018

Chairman Waymaster and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to support HB 2688 before your committee today on behalf of the Kansas Mental Health Coalition (KMHC). HB 2688 creates a behavioral health task force to study the behavioral health system in the state of Kansas. This is a logical next step for Kansas.

The Coalition commends the 2017 Legislature for restoring the FY 17 4% Medicaid reimbursement cuts and a portion of the mental health reform grants for community based treatment, adding state hospital beds, passing the Crisis Intervention Act and other legislation designed to turn around the crisis. These were extremely important actions to begin turning around our eroding behavioral health continuum of care. We have been very encouraged by the active interest of state legislators in the Adult Continuum of Care Report (2015 and January 2017 Update) and now the Mental Health Task Force Report (January 2018).

The 2017 Kansas Legislature directed the creation of an 11-member task force to review the mental health system in Kansas through a budget proviso. The Mental Health Task Force Report prioritized recommendations developed through years of task forces and advisory committees. The process was well facilitated by the Kansas Health Institute and supported by the Department for Aging and Disability Services. That report is a compilation of information from 11 reports, the work of stakeholders who have served on variety of advisory committees over many years, including the subcommittees of the Governors Behavioral Health Services Planning Council. The report is posted at <https://www.kdads.ks.gov/docs/default-source/CSP/bhs-documents/governor's-mental-health-task-force/mental-health-task-force-report.pdf?sfvrsn=2>.

We support the creation of the Behavioral Health Task Force in this legislation. It would be beneficial if this group could help to move forward 2018 MH Task Force recommendations and to study emerging issues. This Task Force provides an important opportunity to bring together key state decision makers and collaborating agencies. Repairing the system requires ongoing action – we will not solve these issues in one year or two, so a strategic planning approach is needed. While almost everyone is aware that resources are lacking for adult mental health inpatient beds and outpatient treatment, it takes a closer examination to understand how these needs are replicated for addictions treatment and crises, and children and adolescents.

The Coalition would appreciate consideration of an amendment to include representation by a consumer and a family member, both of which were represented on the Mental Health Task Force. We would also encourage sufficient funding for contracted facilitation similar to the Mental Health Task Force process.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing support of behavioral health initiatives.

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. This format enables many groups, that would otherwise be unable to participate in the policy making process, to have a voice in public policy matters that directly affect the lives of their constituencies. The opportunity for dialogue and the development of consensus makes all of us stronger and more effective in achieving our mission.