



## Testimony to the House Appropriations Committee on HB 2688

534 S. Kansas Ave, Suite 330, Topeka, Kansas 66603  
Telephone: 785-234-4773 / Fax: 785-234-3189  
[www.acmhck.org](http://www.acmhck.org)

March 12, 2018

Mister Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Kyle Kessler. I am the Executive Director for the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc. The Association represents the 26 licensed Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) in Kansas that provide behavioral health services in all 105 counties, 24-hours a day, seven days a week. In Kansas, CMHCs are the local Mental Health Authorities coordinating the delivery of publicly funded community-based mental health services. As part of licensing regulations, CMHCs are required to provide services to all Kansans needing them, regardless of their ability to pay. This makes the community mental health system the "safety net" for Kansans with mental health needs.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2688 which would establish the behavioral health task force to study the behavioral health system in the state of Kansas. Our Association supports HB 2688 or something like it. We were honored to be a part of the 2017 Legislative Mental Health Task Force which was proposed out of this Committee as a proviso in the Appropriations Bill and finalized in the Conference Committee on the Budget.

Our Association believes that the Legislative Mental Health Task Force exhibited the best of characteristics in terms of taking previously studied issues from work groups, committees, and councils and discussing them in a thoughtful and deliberative manner. The facilitation that was done by Kansas Health Institute was outstanding and a very important part of that process.

We like several components of this legislation. We appreciate the significant diversity among the membership to gain as much knowledge and perspective as possible. We also recognize the need for additional study of issues including the privatization of state hospital programs for adults, behavioral health workforce capacity issues, and the financing of our state's public mental health safety net. The three major crises that are being faced in communities that are being discussed by our Association that include suicide, child welfare, and opioid abuse and addiction certainly could be discussed at length in this type of forum.

We would support amendments to include participation of or information provided by the Governor's Behavioral Health Planning Council which is a well-regarded, long standing resource to our state's behavioral health community. The Council has a multitude of subcommittees that meet, review and report timely and relevant information to the full Council.

In conclusion, our Association believes that a standing task force sanctioned by the Legislature over a two or three year time period will provide a regular review of the system that could help us achieve our goal of having the best behavioral health system in the country, and that goal is unwavering.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today, and I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.