



6 March 2018

**House Federal and State Affairs Committee
Testimony Neutral of House Bill 2308**

Chairman Barker and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. I am Stuart Little, President of the Behavioral Health Association of Kansas (BHAK) the state's trade organization dedicated solely to substance use disorder treatment and prevention providers seeking integrated behavioral health care. BHAK believes that true integrated behavioral health means access and funding for mental illness and substance use disorder treatment without regard to where a consumer seeks services. Our stakeholders large and small and geographically diverse adhere to the core beliefs of expanding capacity and access, and providing consumer choice in the publicly funded behavioral health system.

We strongly support efforts to reduce suicide risk. We encourage funding to ensure the resources exist to assess and provide treatment. We are neutral on the bill because we believe there is a strong need to focus attention and vigilance on potential suicide risks. SUD treatment programs already do suicide risk assessments. Standards of practice require they provide suicide evaluations. They evaluate and when indicated refer suicide risks to emergency services, crisis counseling, or other emergency services unless those services are within an individual counselor's scope of practice.

We do not believe there is a need for a legislative mandated instrument to assess risk. Most SUD facilities are voluntary and patients can leave at will so the patient cannot be detained against their will. If the State wants to articulate a specific risk assessment instrument, that determination should be handled through the KDADS standards process rather than statutory mandate. If, in consultation with the state, they adopt a standard, we have to follow the standards to maintain our services. Moreover, the State would benefit from a comprehensive plan for expanding the crisis capacity network and ensure resources exist. As long as the barriers to serve exist folks in need will have difficulty obtaining services.

I am happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.

Stuart J. Little, Ph.D., President
Behavioral Health Association of Kansas
800 SW Jackson St., Ste. 1100
Topeka, Kansas 66612
785-845-7265 Mobile
<https://www.bhakansas.com>