

February 14, 2017

Katrina McGivern, Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved
Amanda Gress, Kansas Action for Children
Testimony in Support of House Bill 2139
House Health and Human Services Committee

Chairman Hawkins and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Kansas Dental Project coalition, we ask you to support House Bill 2139. Professional associations, health philanthropies, advocacy organizations, social services providers, dental professionals, and Kansas citizens recognize that dental therapists will fill the gap in the Kansas dental workforce that leaves 87 of our state's 105 counties without enough dental providers. Children, the elderly, people with disabilities, rural residents, and Kansans with public insurance or no insurance face particular challenges in accessing needed care. **Allowing Kansas dentists and safety net clinics to hire dental therapists will improve access to dental care and the Kansas economy.**

Dental therapists are highly trained oral health providers who work with a dentist's supervision. Kansas dental therapists will be dental hygienists who obtain advanced education and training at programs accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation. They will then pass comprehensive clinical examinations. Similar to physician assistants, they will **always** work with the supervision of a dentist.

Dental therapists will provide cost-effective dental care. Dental therapists can provide some of the same routine care dentists provide now, and cost less to employ than dentists. Adding a dental therapist to the dental team frees up dentists to focus on more complex procedures, allowing the entire team to operate more efficiently.

Dental therapists will ensure that more Kansans receive the dental care they need. Dental therapists will make it more cost-effective for private dental practices to serve patients with KanCare insurance, and allow safety net clinics to serve more patients. Dental therapists will work in schools, nursing homes, disability service centers, rural areas, and other underserved areas so that more Kansans can receive dental care.

Establishing dental therapists will create jobs and grow the Kansas economy. Dentists who hire dental therapists can see more patients with KanCare insurance or no insurance and grow their practices. Hiring a dental therapist will allow a dental practice to generate an additional \$125,000 in profit annually. Dental therapists are well-paid professionals, and new dental therapy jobs create a career ladder for Kansas dental hygienists.

It is time to allow Kansas dentists and safety net clinics to hire dental therapists. There is shared understanding that far too many Kansans struggle to access dental care. Dental therapists are a commonsense solution to address our state's dental access crisis. **The Kansas Legislature can authorize dental therapists to practice at no cost to the state, making this a model worthy of serious consideration as a financially viable strategy to expand access to oral health care.** Please support House Bill 2139.



www.kansasdental.com

The Kansas Dental Project is a collaborative effort by Kansas citizens, community leaders and health care professionals to address the dental workforce shortage in Kansas and improve access to dental care for Kansans in rural and underserved areas.

The Kansas Dental Project is spearheaded by:

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Members of the Coalition

American Academy of
Pediatrics, Kansas Chapter

American Association For
Community Dental Programs

Americans for Prosperity,
Kansas Chapter

Association of Community
Mental Health Centers of
Kansas

Black Health Care Coalition
of Kansas City

Children's Alliance of Kansas

Communities Creating
Opportunity (CCO)

Communities in Schools of
Kansas Inc.

Community Action Inc.

Community Health Council of
Wyandotte County

Cross-Lines Community
Outreach Inc.

Disability Rights Center of
Kansas

Dodge City Peaceful Tribe

Douglas County Community
Health Improvement
Partnership

East Central Kansas Economic
Opportunity Corporation
(ECKAN)

Economic Opportunity
Foundation Inc.

El Centro Inc.

EmberHope

Family Resource Center of
Pittsburg

Finney County Community
Health Coalition

Interhab

Kansas Action For Children

Kansas Advocates for Better
Care

Kansas Area Agencies on Aging
Association

Kansas Association for the
Medically Underserved

Kansas Association of
Community Action Programs

Kansas Association of Local
Health Departments

Kansas Children's Service
League

Kansas Dental Hygienists'
Association

Kansas Farmers Union

Kansas Health Care Association

Kansas Legislative Policy Group

Kansas Public Health
Association

Kansas Statewide Homeless
Coalition

Keys for Networking

Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas

LeadingAge Kansas

Medical Service Bureau

Mother and Child Health
Coalition

National Alliance on Mental
Illness, Kansas Chapter

National Association of
Community Health Centers

National Rural Health
Association

Northeast Kansas Community
Action Program

Oral Health America

Oral Health Kansas

Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation

Southeast Kansas Community
Action Program

Statewide Independent Living
Council of Kansas

Success By 6 Coalition of
Douglas County

Sunflower State Health

Thrive Allen County

Topeka Independent Living
Resource Center

The Whole Person