



Kansas Association of Local Health Departments  
300 SW 8th Avenue, Suite 300  
Topeka, Kansas 66603-3912  
Phone: 785-271-8391  
[www.kalhd.org](http://www.kalhd.org)

Healthy People Build Strong Communities

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House Health and Human Services Committee  
HB 2139  
February 14, 2017

Chairman Hawkins and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of HB 2139: *Licensure of dental therapists*.

The Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) is the statewide membership organization that represents 97 of the 100 local health departments in Kansas. Public health focuses on prevention, reduction of chronic disease, and improving health outcomes. As a member of the Kansas Dental Project coalition, we support passage of the dental therapist legislation in order to increase access to quality, cost-effective dental care for Kansas families.

Many Kansans lack access to dental care due to a workforce shortage in the state. Untreated dental problems can impact overall health and lead to chronic medical issues such as diabetes and heart disease.

Dental carries remain the most prevalent chronic condition effecting children and adolescents. For children, in particular, lack of adequate dental care can lead to lifelong oral and medical problems.

Dental therapists, working under the direction of dentists, will increase the availability of and access to routine and preventative dental care. This is a cost-effective model, ensuring high quality care and reducing the long-term impacts of inadequate, or in some cases, lack of dental services.

Your support of HB2139 will increase the dental workforce in Kansas, and increase access to needed services for Kansans.

Thank you, Chairman Hawkins and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify.

Michelle Ponce  
Executive Director  
Kansas Association of Local Health Departments  
[michelle.ponce@kalhd.org](mailto:michelle.ponce@kalhd.org)



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