



Kansas Public Health Association

- Promoting and Improving Population Health in Kansas

February 13, 2017

Robert Moser, M.D., President
Kansas Public Health Association
House Bill 2139
House Health and Human Services

Chairman Hawkins and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the hundreds of members of The Kansas Public Health Association (KPHA), I want to thank you for the opportunity for organized public health to testify in support of House Bill 2139 - relating to licensure of dental therapists.

The Kansas Public Health Association's mission is "Promoting and Improving Population Health in Kansas". As a voice for public health, KPHA provides a forum for individuals and organizations to work collectively to assure conditions in which Kansans' lives will be healthy. One area we know that needs to be addressed is oral health.

Most people do not stop to consider the importance of good dental health to overall health but many studies clearly demonstrate that alignment. Studies also suggest that oral bacteria and the inflammation associated with periodontitis — a severe form of gum disease — might play a role in some diseases, even heart disease. Also, certain diseases, such as diabetes and HIV/AIDS, can lower the body's resistance to infection, making oral health problems more severe.

However, to obtain good dental health status we first need to assure that access to qualified providers is available, across all our communities. Geography, access to insurance, and zip codes should not determine an individual's health status, but we find that this is often the case. House Bill 2139 in some form has been an ongoing discussion over the last few years. Improvements in the model have occurred with continued input by many stakeholders. While it may be tempting to think dental access shortages may be resolved if we add a dental school to the University of Kansas School of Medicine campus, we all know the challenges of getting providers into the areas that may need them the most, or even to get providers to accept certain forms of insurance. We appreciate the requirement in HB 2139 that any supervising dentist of a dental therapist shall be either: (1) Employed by an indigent health care clinic; or (2) enrolled as a Medicaid provider.



The Kansas Public Health Association supports House Bill 2139 as it supports an effort to improve access to dental care and the dental health status of vulnerable Kansans.

Thank you Chairman Hawkins and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2139.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Moser, M.D." with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Moser, M.D., President
Kansas Public Health Association