

My name is Chris Goetz. I am the pastor of the First Christian Church of Garnett Kansas.

I assume that you have pursued the positions you are in because you want to make a difference. You desire to see change in this state or even the country.

I remind you today that this matter is not a matter of gender, race, wealth or political party. This matter we bring before you today is a matter far beyond all these areas. This is a matter of human life. Human life is the reason we are all in the positions we are in. Great people saw something in each one of us and made a decision that we would be the right persons to represent them in the bigger picture to preserve the best interest especially concerning life.

Right now life is being threatened. You won't understand truly until it has happened to you or a family member. This story I share is one that has happened 9 times to people close to me in the last couple years.

As a pastor people often come to me with major struggles. Abuse, addiction, marriage struggles... many other things. They come to me looking for help. On occasion, one brings issues greater than what I am qualified to bring solution to. I must say when I refer them onto a hospital facility, the results of are very disappointing and even counter-productive. This is their story: For three days, most of these people were held as expected. One insurance even allowed 7 days. But then we run into the problem. They are released being told something along these lines: "Your insurance won't cover any more unless you have made an attempt on your life." They realize they need help, and when they turn to the appropriate channels for help, they are rejected and essentially told their life is worth nothing. Sadly many of these people from southeast Kansas have gone home and made an attempt on their life. The 6 of the 9 people, I can't name, made the attempt on life and succeeded. While we can't take responsibility for their struggles, we are responsible for our failure. Failure to care for human life.

Having said this, my issue is not with the hospitals, because they are not really equipped to deal with these mental health issues. My issue is with the system. We are allowing a man or woman with a business degree to have say over the doctor who has 8 or 12 years of specialized training to determine what will be the best way to treat this person. Insurance is dictating how they will be treated. If you don't believe me, ask your provider! Insurance is saying one treatment fits all people's needs, and that is wrong! I am here to tell you that with mental health, every doctor needs the right to help the way they were trained to do in regards to the oath they took. If this doesn't change, people will end up another failure of a broken system. Many suicides occur because people leave their 3 day treatment so messed up on meds that their thought processes are not clear or healthy! The tunnel called depression only allows them to see the bad things around them and it is up to us to make sure their doctor, who has sworn an oath to protect life, can have the ability to do so!

You are people with great power! We can't make this a party issue... this is a matter of life! We must partner to do the right thing, and we believe this Bill is the beginning to seeing change in an area desperately needing it.