

**Testimony to Health Human Service Committee
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Good afternoon. I would like to say thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. I would like to introduce myself, my name is Jayme Applebee. I am a Board Certified Family Nurse Practitioner. I am licensed by the state of Kansas to provide family centered healthcare to patients of all ages. I graduated from Kansas Newman University with my bachelor's degree in nursing AND a Master's degree from Fort Hays State University.

After graduating, I returned to my home town of Liberal Kansas where I have been employed with Dr. Knudsen for the past 16 years. I was born and raised in Liberal and knew I always wanted to return home to practice in rural Kansas. I've been very fortunate to have achieved a very successful family practice. Most days my schedule is full and my days are very busy caring for patients. I would also like to mention that I also help run a Maternal Infant program through our local Health Department that serves clients that are typically below poverty level and uninsured. The program is funded through KDHE and each one of these clients have no insurance and no access to medical care. This program has been very rewarding to me on a personal level because these patients are the one's no one else is willing to see. They have little education, no insurance, and very little money. These patients often drive for miles to be seen in our program because they aren't accepted in any other clinics.

In 1999 when I started in Liberal, I was the only nurse practitioner working in our community. The number of NPs in Liberal has increase significantly in the past three years. We currently have as many NPs as we do medical doctors. We have 8 nurse practitioners practicing in Liberal, we provide 50% of the health care service to our community. Recently in Liberal, NPs have also been hired to work in the hospital where historically only physicians would be working. **Liberal has struggled to keep physicians in the community, especially in family practice.** The NPs here have family and are very involved in our community, just like me. We have roots here, most of our practitioners were born and raised in South West Kansas. In fact, I've been blessed to be able to care for one of your very own state representatives Shannon Francis, Carol, and his three beautiful children. I spoke with both Shannon and Carol and they agreed that I could disclose this information as they are happy with the services I provide.

My patient's rely and depend on me for their health care needs. My patients have put their trust in me to take care of them and their loved ones. My collaborating physician is now 64 years old. He talks of "slowing down" and eventually retiring. As the current legislation stands, I would be unable to continue to practice if he does decide to retire. Or heaven forbid, something happened to his health and he was unable to continue to practice. **I cannot continue to practice if I have no collaborating physician or if there is a death of my collaborating physician. I have in fact spoke to other MD's in Liberal regarding working with them if something did happen to my current collaborating physician. I have yet to find one that is willing to assist me due to the fear of potential lawsuits and malpractice issues.**

I would like to share a story with you regarding one of my very good friends who is a Nurse Practitioner in Liberal. Her collaborating physician suddenly died from a blood clot and the doors to her practice were closed the very next day. She had no one that would sign a collaborative agreement with her and she was unable to practice. **Suddenly not only were her patients without a provider but her household was without an income.** The local pharmacist were unable to refill any of her patient's prescription because she no longer had a collaborating physician. In some cases, life-saving medications were unable to be filled because her MD had suddenly passed away. Can you imagine the sheer anxiety people were experiencing because they had no one to refill their medications, treat their minor health conditions, or manage their long term diseases?

In short, Nurse Practitioners are skilled, compassionate professionals who already serve as the sole-primary-care providers in rural medically underserved and uninsured populations. Required collaboration by physician's causes needless, costly, and for some unfavorable outcomes.

So, I'm here today to offer this simple solution to support rural health care and that is to grant nurse practitioners the ability to practice to the full extent of their education and training – and remove unnecessary regulations. **As the Federal Trade Commission stated in their report we can help: "... alleviate health care access problems if undue regulatory burdens were reduced".** I want to serve my neighbors in southwest Kansas and if I have no physician to sign a regulatory collaborative agreement I will not be able to practice and there may be no one to care for my patients.

Thank you for your time and consideration.