



Healthy Minds. Healthy Lives. Healthy Communities.

---

## **Testimony to Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare**

**On SB 123**

**By Ric Dalke**

**Executive Director of Compass Behavioral Health**

**February 11, 2015**

Madame Chairwoman and members of the Committee, my name is Ric Dalke, I am the Executive Director of Compass Behavioral Health. I wish I could be there to present but appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding SB 123 and its effects on the people we serve, those experiencing emotional and brain disorders.

Compass Behavioral Health is one of 26 Community Mental health Centers across the State of Kansas. We serve 13 counties of far southwest Kansas including Finney, Ford, Hamilton, Kearny, Gray, Hodgeman, Stanton, Morton, Grant, Wichita, Greeley, Lane and Scott. Eight of the 13 counties are “Frontier” counties defined as those with less than 6 persons per square mile. The rural and frontier nature of our area leads to a unique set of issues and problems as we attempt to utilize standard treatment approaches to psychiatric concerns such as medication treatment. For example: Each single psychiatrist in Frontier Kansas covers approximately 5,000 lives within the 683 square miles they have to cover versus the approximately 900 lives within a 1 square mile area for a psychiatrist in an urban area. Child Psychiatry is just a fantasy for Western and Frontier Kansas counties –they just don’t exist.

With that in mind, I want to list the concerns that I have for Rural Kansas residents and why we oppose SB 123 that would repeal the current exemption on mental health medications for persons in the state Medicaid program from restrictive practices such as prior authorization and preferred drug lists:

- Access to psychotropic medications is a primary concern. As stated above, we know we have rural access problems to have providers, please don’t compound that with less access to the medications.

- Our residents might drive up to 2 hours for a medication appointment and will just do without when there are significant delays / barriers due to administrative burdens of increased paper work and process
- Rural children and adults need specific medications in a timely and precise dosage. Placing restrictions on these medications can result in unnecessary visits to the emergency room, admission to state mental health hospital programs, or incarceration.
- Cost shifting will increase state and local costs and compromise the care and safety of persons experiencing serious emotional and brain disorders and others in our communities.
- We support the use of educational approaches and possible soft edits to address safety issues
- As new medications become available, rural people deserve similar access to these medications, which can occur much more easily under current statute without the barriers of SB 123.

In summary, access to psychiatric help and treatment is essential. In rural and frontier Western Kansas we experience a number of geographical and resource barriers. Please don't force the additional barriers of SB 123 onto rural Kansans who experience emotional and brain disorders.

Thank you for allowing my written testimony.

Sincerely,



Ric Dalke

Executive Director

Compass Behavioral Health

531 Campusview

Garden City, Kansas 67846

[rdalke@compassbh.org](mailto:rdalke@compassbh.org)