



## Testimony to Senate Public Health and Welfare on Senate Bill 341

534 S. Kansas Ave, Suite 330, Topeka, Kansas 66603  
Telephone: 785-234-4773 / Fax: 785-234-3189  
[www.acmhck.org](http://www.acmhck.org)

Kyle Kessler  
Executive Director  
January 27, 2016

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, my name is Kyle Kessler, I am the Executive Director for the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc. The Association appreciates the opportunity to submit this written testimony on Senate Bill 341, which deals with step therapy within the Medicaid program.

The Association represents the 26 licensed Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) in Kansas that provide behavioral health services in all 105 counties, 24-hours a day, seven days a week. In Kansas, CMHCs are the local Mental Health Authorities coordinating the delivery of publicly funded community-based mental health services. As part of licensing regulations, CMHCs are required to provide services to all Kansans needing them, regardless of their ability to pay. This makes the community mental health system the “safety net” for Kansans with mental health needs, collectively serving over 127,000 Kansans.

Our members believe that sound clinical and medical treatment are the cornerstones to good mental health and overall healthcare. CMHCs have a wide range of qualified medical professionals across the state who are well-trained and educated to treat children and adults who often 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.

A study published in the American Journal of Managed Care in February 2014 stated that there is...“strong evidence that the disruption to therapy that formulary restrictions [such as step therapy] cause offsets much, if not all, of the possible savings to Medicaid, at least among atypical antipsychotic users with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.”

The National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors published an issue paper in October of 2008 stated...“Given significant individual variability in response, ultimately all marketed antipsychotic medications should be available to patients who require treatment with them.” It goes on to say, “Prior authorization and step therapy are two of the mechanisms that generally add administrative burdens and costs.”

What is contained in SB 341 appears to be a simple strikeout of language that could lead to additional restrictions on medications used to treat mental illness. We would ask the committee to make sure that any changes proposed to the Medicaid program relating to this be thoroughly vetted. Step therapy is a short-sighted and dangerous policy decision for individuals that live with mental illness and we want to ensure that the intent of this bill is limited to non behavioral health medications.

The Association appreciates this committee taking a look at this very important issue. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.