

KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

An Organization Dedicated to Improving the Lives of Kansans with Mental Illnesses

Testimony presented to the House Federal and State Affairs Committee Support HB 2146

Amy A. Campbell – February 14, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to address your committee today on behalf of the Kansas Mental Health Coalition (KMHC). Please support HB 2146 to increase services of crisis centers and clubhouse programs.

The KMHC recommendations are based on the strategic plan to prioritize the Behavioral Health Continuum of Care – identifying gaps and barriers to care that are harmful to individuals and lead to destructive cycles of hospitalization or incarceration and waste public resources. State policies should be strategic instead of reactive, striking a balance between community-based services and inpatient care.

Please pass HB 2146 to expand the cap on Lottery Vending Machine funding for Crisis Stabilization Centers and Clubhouse Program Funding: These are community services that directly divert from state hospital admissions, jails and nursing facilities for mental health.

Crisis centers and clubhouse programs successfully intervene to reduce the pressure on state hospital admissions and jails – providing timely community based treatment and support to keep people in the community, particularly those who endure chronic behavioral health issues.

Past strategic planning endorses this approach, including the 2018 and 2019 Mental Health Task Force Reports and the 2021 and 2022 Reports of the Special Legislative Committee on Mental Health Modernization.

Why this matters: Behavioral health programs struggle to sustain treatment for mental illness and addictions for a largely uninsured population. Workforce shortages impact every program. The Coalition commends the Legislature, Governor and state agencies for strategic planning and implementation in recent years to address gaps in the continuum, but this work is ongoing.

If we do not invest in the continuum, we spend more state dollars at the highest, most expensive levels of care. Kansas does not have sufficient state hospital beds today – and these programs are key to reducing the pressure on those state hospitals.

In Kansas, we are experiencing a mental health crisis where the symptoms of mental illness overcome people due to lack of services and isolation. Studies have shown that Clubhouse members engaged in supported employment programs have nearly 50 % competitive employment rates, earn higher wages and work more hours than participants in other vocational programs. In other studies, the quality of life for Clubhouse members improved in housing, education, friendships, and employment.

Regional community crisis locations including substance use disorder (SUD) services with sustainable funding effectively provide treatment interventions that can quickly stabilize individuals in crisis. There is designated funding for these services from the Lottery Vending Machines, but we have exceeded the statutory cap. Please support legislation increasing that cap in order to fund crisis stabilization centers and Crisis Intervention Centers that care for short-term involuntary patients. The percentage of uninsured served within more intensive community treatment programs means that these programs struggle for sustainability and staffing. Crisis

centers admit individuals who are in crisis – often transported by law enforcement – rather than taking them to jail or admitting to state hospitals.

The 2018 Legislature established state funding for Clubhouse Model mental health services that support the Clubhouse Model Program (Wichita Breakthrough Club) as an effective part of the continuum of care and allow for expansion to communities across the state that determine both a need and capacity to develop Clubhouse model services for people with severe and persistent mental illness. These programs are succeeding but the allocation from the Lottery vending machine funds needs to increase in order to expand to additional communities.

The Coalition commends the Legislature for implementing continued improvements to the behavioral health continuum of care. The establishment of the 988 Crisis Line and implementation of Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers are transformational. Building out the full continuum of care through ongoing strategic implementation will better support the needs of our most vulnerable citizens and their families.

Thank you for your consideration.

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