



TIM R. NORTON
Commissioner - Second District

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS

COUNTY COURTHOUSE • SUITE 320 • 525 NORTH MAIN • WICHITA, KANSAS 67203-3759
TELEPHONE (316) 660-9300 • FAX (316) 383-8275
e-mail: tnorton@sedgwick.gov

Testimony on Senate Bill 160

Presented to: Committee on Public Health and Welfare

February 18, 2013

Good afternoon Madam Chair and members of the committee. I am Commissioner Tim Norton representing the Sedgwick County Board of Health and the Board of Sedgwick County Commissioners. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to the proposal to prohibit local and state health departments from seeking, requesting, implementing, advocating or promoting any form of accreditation.

As a County Commissioner and member of the Local Board of Health, I have worked for over five years to understand the intent of accreditation. For the last eighteen months, I've been working with commissioners and health department directors from seven counties to engage county commissioners and provide information about public health accreditation.

The accreditation process by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) has the goal of advancing public health performance by providing a national framework of standards for local, state, territorial and tribal health departments. PHAB is a national non-profit organization incorporated in 2007 to manage and promote the national accreditation process. It is designed to be a free standing entity, **not a federal agency**.

In October 2010, the Sedgwick County Health Department announced its intention to pursue voluntary accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). It is a review of how the services provided by our department demonstrate conformity with the ten essential services.

What is accreditation about? It's about:

- community engagement and involving stakeholders
- involving the local board of health in decision-making
- using the best information and research available
- training and retaining a qualified public health workforce and
- creating a culture of performance improvement.

When local and state health departments apply to be accredited, their documentation is reviewed against established standards by a team of their peers. The standards make us better. This process enables the Health Department to evaluate the “what and how” it delivers public health services. Accreditation provides a measure of security for the board and the citizens, because a peer review team of seasoned public health professionals have given the department a stamp of approval. With this stamp of approval, our citizens know that they can expect quality and accountability in all aspects of our public health services.

Sedgwick County has many nationally accredited departments. Our Emergency Medical Service, Fire District and Forensics Science Center all have national accreditations. The process of accreditation is not new. **The end game is to serve the citizens of Sedgwick County in the best manner possible.**

I am 100% committed to our Health Department accreditation as a message to our citizens that we are dedicated to delivering the highest quality services.