



To: House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee

From: Rachelle Colombo
Director of Government Affairs

Date: February 15, 2016

Subject: HB 2617; workers compensation; medical administrator, electronic filing

The Kansas Medical Society appreciates the opportunity to offer the following comments on behalf of Kansas physicians as you consider HB 2617. The bill would eliminate the requirement that the Kansas Secretary of Labor appoint a licensed physician as a medical administrator for the Division of Workers compensation.

Though we have no issue with the desire to *contract* with an individual rather than *employ* a full or part-time medical administrator, we do not support eliminating the requirement that the medical administrator be a physician.

The role of the medical administrator is to assist in the setting of the fee schedule and to ensure the department policies and procedures assist in maintaining access to health care providers and health care facilities for the treatment of injured employees. When this statute was implemented, it was the intent of the legislature to ensure that when treating physicians had disputes with insurers, or needed further clarification on the development of the fee schedule, or had questions about policies that affect the delivery of health care, the medical administrator would be an individual that could fulfill the role of being an effective resource and liaison with the physician and provider community, and speak authoritatively on medical issues. At that time, we had heard from a number of our members about the need to have someone at the agency who understood physicians' concerns, was a credible resource and knowledgeable about medical issues. Since then, the legislature has comprehensively reformed workers compensation statutes twice, but has maintained the requirement for someone in the department to have an understanding of physician issues.

There are already a number of barriers to encouraging physician participation in the workers compensation system. To maintain confidence of participating physicians in the integrity of the system with regard to disputes, the fee schedule and medical policy, we believe it is vitally important that the medical administrator be a licensed physician. We have no problem with the concept of contracting for such services, if it helps the Division manage their costs and human resources in the most efficient way.

We respectfully request that the committee maintain the requirement that the Department of Labor utilize a physician for the role of medical administrator. Whether that individual is an employee or has a contractual arrangement, a physician should be advising on medical issues. Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments in opposition of HB 2617 as currently drafted. Thank you.