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House Health and Human Services Committee

February 24, 2015

Chairman Hawkins and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of HB 2079. My name is Tanya Dorf Brunner, and I am the Executive Director of Oral Health Kansas, Inc. We are the statewide advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the importance of lifelong dental health by shaping policy and educating the public so Kansans know that all mouths matter. We achieve our mission through advocacy, public awareness and education. Oral Health Kansas has over 1,100 supporters, including dentists, dental hygienists, educators, safety net clinics, charitable foundations, and advocates for children, people with disabilities and older Kansans.

We see three types of barriers to accessing oral health in our state: access to a payment source; access to a provider; and willingness to access services. A variety of approaches to all three types of access must be present in order for all people to have adequate access to oral health care. With our partners in the oral health field, we are working to address each of these through a variety of means.

Oral Health Kansas recognizes the need to expand and strengthen the dental workforce in Kansas. Our state's rural geography and aging population mean that many communities and specific populations, such as the elderly living in community-based settings, do not have access to even the most basic dental services. As a means to expand the dental workforce, we support HB 2079. We stand behind the Registered Dental Practitioner model outlined in the bill.

Oral Health Kansas also recognizes that, without a payment source for dental care, no amount of new providers can fulfill Kansans' unmet dental needs. As the committee reviews HB 2079, we encourage you to also strengthen the KanCare dental benefits so that a Registered Dental Practitioner's services might be broadly available.

Oral Health Kansas is dedicated to collaboration and counts the conferees on both sides as partners. We count ourselves lucky to be part of an oral health community that is dedicated to innovation and progress toward better oral health for all Kansans.

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