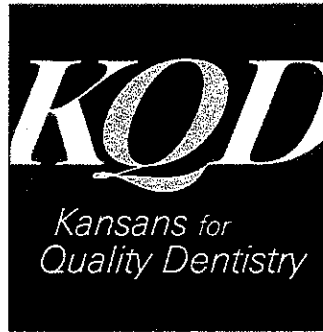




TO: House Committee on Health and Human Services
FROM: Kansans for Quality Dentistry
DATE: February 24, 2015
RE: Opposition to House Bill 2079

Chairman Hawkins and committee members, I am Chris Wallace, a resident of Wichita Kansas. I'm joined by hundreds of fellow Kansans concerned about preserving quality oral health in our state. We are from communities – large and small – throughout Kansas. Our common link is interest in preserving access to quality dentistry, regardless of where we live. We appreciate having the opportunity to express our opposition to the measure you're considering today as we see it as a very serious threat to dentistry and public health in Kansas.

Sold as a way to fill the gap for those counties where a dentist doesn't reside, this proposal is not the answer. In fact, if we look at the experience in the only state with mid-levels practicing in the general population (Minnesota) we see that the vast majority of these mid-levels work in or close to urban areas. The very small number of mid-levels in Minnesota are mostly concentrated in the Minneapolis-St Paul area. Yet, that's the state the supporters of mid-levels in Kansas always point to as a solution. The test there has not worked as suggested.

This proposal – HB 2079 – is not a solution for Kansas communities working to increase dental access. Rather, we believe that time-tested programs similar to those used to successfully recruit physicians to rural areas make more sense in our state. To that end, we urge the legislature to reject this measure and instead consider state support for scholarship programs to support the recruitment of dental students to practice in underserved areas in exchange for student loan forgiveness. This program has worked successfully in our state to attract medical students to rural areas upon graduation.

A private sector initiative similar in nature was established recently, yet it doesn't receive any public support. We encourage policymakers to consider adding public support so the program can grow in a more rapid manner. Thank you for your consideration of these matters.

Chris Wallace- 4601 E Douglas, Wichita, KS 67218