

Testimony on HB 2688
Establishing a Behavioral Health Task Force
House Appropriations Committee
March 12, 2018

Chairman Waymaster and Members of the committee—

My name is Denise Cyzman, and I am the Executive Director of the Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved (KAMU). Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today about HB 2688 and establishing the Behavioral Health Task Force. KAMU supports the establishment of the Behavioral Health Task Force and requests to be added to the Task Force, thereby, representing the 23 safety net clinics and thousands of their patients receiving mental health services at their sites.

As the federally-designated Primary Care Association of Kansas, KAMU serves 42 primary care safety net clinics. In 2017, KAMU member clinics served almost 305,000 patients through more than 878,000 visits.¹ One out of ten Kansans now receive primary care, dental, or mental health services at KAMU member safety net clinics. The clinics strive to provide care that considers the mind, mouth, and body, along with life circumstances.

Often overlooked, primary care safety net clinics play a significant role in the Kansas mental health system. The clinics are an integral part of a system of providers and organizations who serve Kansans at various points along the mental health continuum – starting with prevention and moving all the way to inpatient services. Twenty-three safety net clinics provide integrated medical and behavioral health services to more Kansans each year. In 2016, the clinics provided behavioral health services to almost 16,400 patients during 51,000 visits². This is a 66% increase in patients and a 47% increase in visits over the last five years. We suspect 2017 data will demonstrate continued growth, as the safety net clinics, too, are seeing the increasing demand for behavioral health services.

Although the clinics' models of care for mental health vary, the goal is to provide fully integrated care, with a behavioral health general practitioner working as part of the medical team. Let me describe what this looks like. Imagine that you make an appointment at the clinic for a routine diabetes check-up. During the visit, you mention to the doctor that you have been feeling a little low and depressed. Instead of referring you to a mental health specialist outside of the clinic, requiring you to make an appointment for a different day, your doctor walks down the hall and asks the behavioral health specialist to come into the exam room and talk with you. The physician makes the introduction, helping you and the mental health provider to establish a

¹ KAMU Quality Reporting System, State Grantee Preliminary Data, 2017. Accessed on 3.8.18.

² KAMU Quality Reporting System, State Grantee Data, 2016. Accessed on 3.8.18.

relationship and begin to address your mental health concerns. If it is determined you may need a medication, the behavioral health specialist consults with another member of the team – a psychiatric medical management professional - to determine what is most appropriate. All of this is done within the one visit. This is fast, easy, and links the medical care with the mental health care.

Safety net clinics are a key part of the solution for the mental health crisis in this state. Providing integrated primary care and behavioral health services is not a substitute for care provided by community mental health centers, substance abuse disorder treatment providers, state hospitals, and other behavioral health providers. What the safety net clinics are, though, is a part of larger system that, together, provides a full continuum of care to address all levels of mental health needs.

It is important for the State to access every tool at your disposal. We feel the establishment of a Behavioral Health Task Force is necessary to assess the strength of our current mental health system and identify strategies to use all of these tools in an effective and coordinated manner. With this in mind, KAMU requests to be added to the Behavioral Health Task Force, as we work together to find the Kansas solution to the mental health crisis. Thank you.