



Testimony Before the  
House Appropriations Committee  
By  
Sally Hodges, Advocacy Chair  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy – Kansas

Chair Waymaster, Vice Chair Proehl, Ranking Member Wolfe Moore, and Members of the Committee;

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, Kansas (AAMFT-KS) thanks you for the opportunity to provide input on House Bill 2688 (HB 2688). AAMFT-KS represents the professional interests of Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) in Kansas. AAMFT-KS supports the creation of a behavioral health task force and respectfully requests that HB 2688 be amended to allow the participation of a person appointed by AAMFT-KS.

Marriage and Family Therapy is a nationally and internationally recognized profession. MFTs are licensed to provide mental health services in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Public and private health plans recognize MFTs as independent providers of mental health services. Marriage and Family Therapy is one of the five federally recognized core mental health professions, and MFTs are recognized as eligible providers by the Department of Veterans Affairs. In Kansas, licensed clinical MFTs must complete a Master's or Doctoral degree in Marriage and Family Therapy or a related field – including courses in diagnosis and a supervised practicum, completion of a two-year supervised post-graduate experience, and pass a board examination. These rigorous standards are necessary to measure competency in providers.

A behavioral health task force to examine the behavioral health system in Kansas is an admirable and much needed goal. The Governor's Mental Health Task Force Report from 2014 acknowledges that "The focus of any mental health initiative needs to start with the person: the adult, the child, the family. People live within communities, so emphasis must also be placed on strengthening the natural environment where people have the opportunity to be productive, healthy, connected, to contribute, and to achieve meaningful and important goals." Licensed Clinical MFTs utilize a unique, systemic perspective in treating mental and behavioral health disorders. This systemic perspective can be particularly helpful in the behavioral health task force to recognize the differing relationships that an individual may have.

AAMFT-KS appreciates your time and consideration on this issue and urges your support for including MFTs in the task force.