

**DATE:** February 7, 2017

**TO:** The Honorable Dan Hawkins, Chair  
House Health and Human Services Committee

**FROM:** Ernest Kutzley, Advocacy Director, AARP Kansas

**RE:** HB 2031 - Establishing Palliative Care Advisory Council

Good afternoon Chairman Hawkins and members of the House Health and Human Services Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to submit our written testimony in support of House Bill 2031 for establishment of the palliative care and quality of life interdisciplinary advisory council.

As a nonprofit, nonpartisan social welfare organization with a membership and offices in all 50 states, AARP's mission is to help people 50 and older have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. We seek to help older Americans live long and healthy lives.

Palliative care is specialized medical care for people with serious illnesses and focuses on the whole person during the course of the illness. Palliative care is the attention to and treatment of symptoms, regardless of the cause. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness and can be provided along with curative treatment. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the person and the family.

Palliative care is provided by a specially-trained team of doctors, nurses, social workers, and other specialists who work together with the individual's other doctors to provide an extra layer of support. This team works with the patient and family members to provide a continuum of care that can begin with the onset of an illness or whenever comfort, support and quality of life issues become significant concerns.

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To ensure that people are afforded every opportunity to make informed decisions about the appropriate range of medical and palliative options, the knowledge base about such care must be substantially improved and should be sensitive to cultural values and beliefs to improve access and reduce racial and cultural disparities.

Establishing the palliative care and quality of life interdisciplinary advisory council will be a good way to offer education, guidance, and monitoring of palliative care policy in Kansas. Meetings should be publicized and open to allow input and provide educational opportunities.

For AARP's more than 320,000 members in Kansas, we respectfully request your support of HB 2031. Thank you for your consideration of our comments.