



**House Committee on
Health and Human Services**

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Executive Director

NAMI Kansas is the state organization of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, a grassroots organization whose members are individuals living with mental illnesses and their family members who provide care and support. NAMI Kansas provides programs of peer support and education by and for our members through a statewide network of local affiliates. We advocate for individuals who are living with mental illness to ensure their access to treatment and supportive services.

Evidence is clear, even from the most recent Mission of Mercy, that there is an issue with access to dental care in Kansas. Individuals living with serious mental illness are among those who are deeply affected by lack of access to dental care. Apart from the need for dental care that all Kansans need, individuals who routinely take psychiatric medications experience dry mouth which compromises the quality of their oral health. Left untreated this condition can result in tooth loss.

NAMI Kansas has been involved with the Kansas Dental Project since its inception. We believe that the creation of licensure for Dental Therapists represents a positive step forward for the dental health of all Kansans. We believe that Dental Therapists will be prepared to provide routine and preventive care to underserved populations such as the individuals we represent because they will be trained in motivational interviewing, education and prevention in addition to routine care.

Dental Therapists will be good for business in Kansas and good for the health of all Kansans. It is a well- balanced and cost effective approach. We urge you to act favorably on HB 2139.

Thank you for your consideration.