



# Healthy Communities W Y A N D O T T E

**To:** Rep. Dan Hawkins, Chair of House Health and Human Services Committee  
**From:** Gretchen H. Kunkel, Chair of Healthy Communities Wyandotte Policy Committee  
**Date:** February 14, 2017  
**Re:** Written testimony in support of House Bill 2139 (Kansas Dental Therapist)

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Kansas Dental Therapists in HB 2139.

I am writing on behalf of Healthy Communities Wyandotte (HCW), a coalition of more than 100 organizations dedicated to creating a healthier Wyandotte County. These members recognize that the “social determinants” of health—the conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play—have a strong impact on the health of a community. Another important factor is access to needed health care services such as dental care.

Lack of access to dental care is a crisis issue in Wyandotte County. It is compounded by poverty, lack of health insurance, and workforce shortages. The data bears this out. If you review the map below you can see that the lowest-income census tracts, in the eastern part of Wyandotte County, are also the areas with least frequent dental visits.

Opponents to the dental therapist model often cite safety concerns when speaking against this common-sense approach to expanding access. In reality, all the research from around the world shows that mid-level providers provide as good, if not better, care. We believe that opposition to dental therapists is mostly an attempt to protect the business interests of a few practitioners. As such, opposition is anti-competitive and runs deeply against one of our strongest values of our State. You can see from the other testimony submitted that not all dentists feel this way. It is the (needless) fears of a few that is standing in the way of progress for the many.

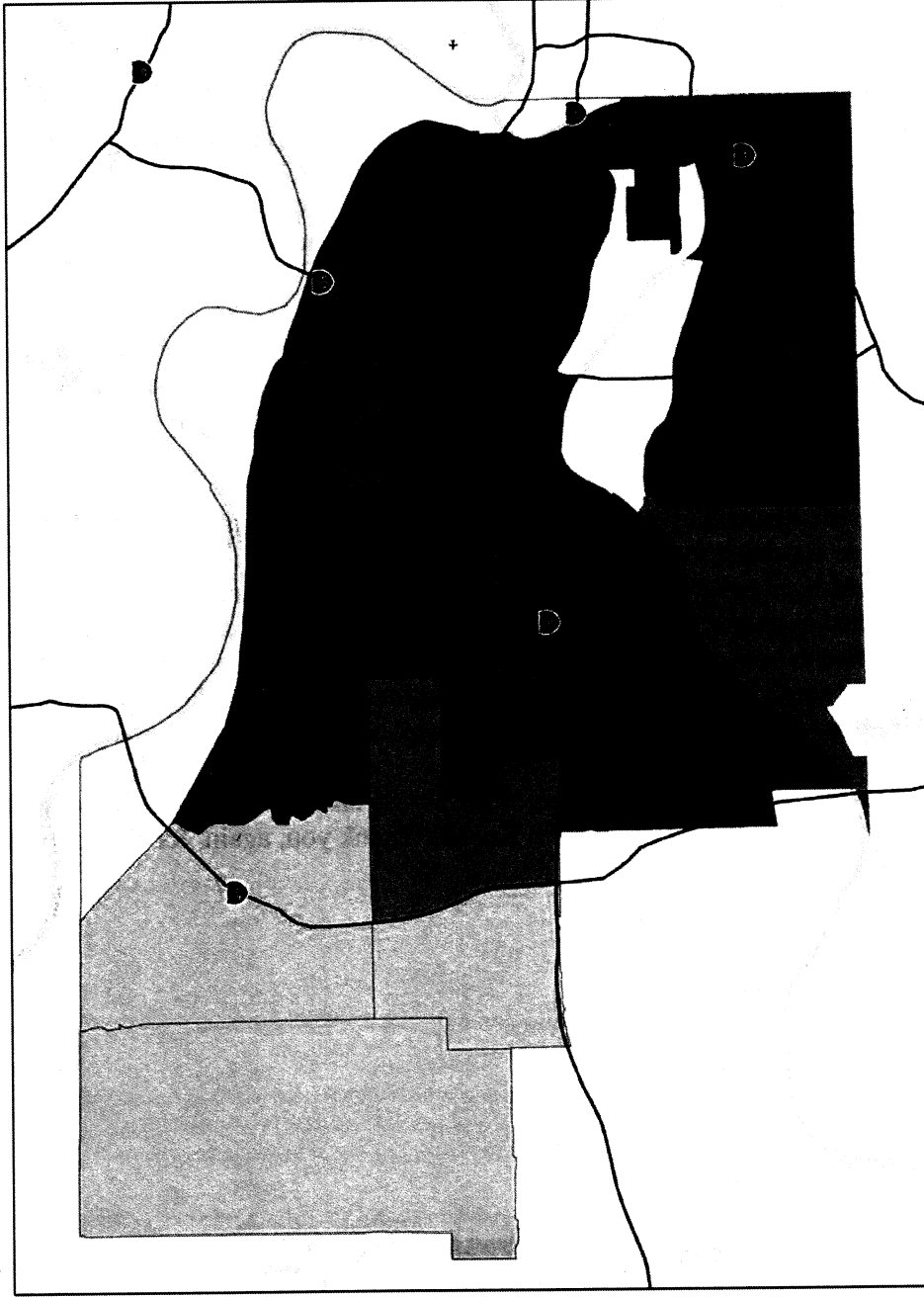
For these reasons, we urge the members of the House and Human Services Committee to support adoption of the dental therapist model in Kansas. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

Gretchen H. Kunkel



**Visits to dentist or dental clinic among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years  
by census tract, Kansas City, KS, 2014**

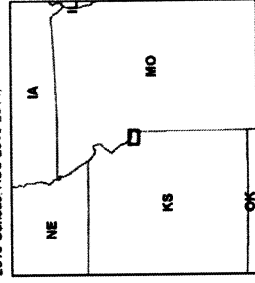


Classification:  
Jenks natural breaks (9 classes) based  
on data for all 500 cities' census tracts.  
Legend depicts only those data classes  
within this map extent.

Census tracts with population less  
than 50 were excluded from the map



Data sources:  
CDC BRFSS 2014, US Census Bureau  
2010 Census, ACS 2010-2014.



Date: 6/15/2016