

Board of Directors

Sonja Armbruster
Wichita State University

Chlp Blaser
Douglas Co. Community Found.

Bruce Bergstrom
KAN-SEAL

Jo D. Clepper, MSN, MHA, RN, CCRN
Children's Mercy Health

Barb Conant
Kansas Advocates for Better Care

Janette Definger, RDH, MSDH
Kansas Dental Hygienists' Assoc.

John Foles, DDS
Foles Pediatric Dentistry

Robyne Gootes
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Kansas

Krista Hahn, RDH, MBA, ECP III
Marion Dental Clinic

Schaunta James-Boyd
EC Tyree Health and Dental Clinic

Steve Peppes
Delta Dental of Kansas

Kevin Robertson, MPA, CAE
Kansas Dental Association

Amber Sellers
EN Engineering

Becky M. Smith, DDS
UMKC School of Dentistry

Brian Smith, E.D.
Galena School District

**Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation
February 14, 2017**

Chair Tyson and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of SB 188. My name is Tanya Dorf Brunner, and I am the Executive Director at Oral Health Kansas, Inc. We are the statewide advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the importance of lifelong dental health by shaping policy and educating the public so Kansans know that all mouths matter. We achieve our mission through advocacy, public awareness and education. Oral Health Kansas has over 1,400 supporters, including dentists, dental hygienists, educators, safety net clinics, charitable foundations, and advocates for children, people with disabilities and older Kansans.

One of Oral Health Kansas' core values is to reduce financial barriers to Kansans receiving the dental care they need. Our state offers a limited dental benefit to low-income adults served on the KanCare program. They are able to access only dental cleanings and emergency extractions. This leaves a wide gap in services and means the working poor end up with no way to pay for common dental services like fillings and crowns. It also means when people have their teeth extracted they have no way to pay for dentures.

It is hard to get ahead in life and be a productive tax-payer when you have dental pain and when you have missing or decayed teeth. A 2008 study by the National Institutes of Health found that people with missing front teeth were viewed as less intelligent, less desirable and less trustworthy than people with a healthy smile.¹ Employers want to hire people with bright smiles.

In order to fund the fundamental services Kansans need, including basic dental services, Oral Health Kansas believes our state needs to adopt a revenue plan that is balanced, equitable, and sustainable. SB 188 does just that. This bill will restore many of the tax cuts that have starved our state budget over the last few years. Kansas has never been a high tax state, but we have been able to collect revenue in a manner that was fair to people at all income levels. This revenue supported the things we value as Kansans – high quality schools, safe roads, and a safety net to help the people who need it most. SB 188 will restore the revenue Kansas needs to sustain the state that we call home.

On behalf of Oral Health Kansas, I urge you to support SB 188. The time is now to support our state, and this bill will give us exactly what we need at exactly the time we need it. Thank you for your consideration.

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18556899>