



455 SE Golf Park Blvd
Topeka, KS 66605
785.234.0878
www.kacap.org

Partners in America's Poverty Fighting Network

Scott Anglemyer, Executive Director
Kansas Association of Community Action Programs (KACAP)
Testimony for the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
February 1, 2018

Chairwoman Schmidt and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the membership of the Kansas Association of Community Action Programs (KACAP) regarding SB 312, which would provide for the licensure of dental therapists in Kansas. KACAP is the membership association for Community Action Agencies in Kansas that are working to create economic opportunity and end poverty in their communities. Our member agencies work to better focus local, state, private, and federal resources to assist low-income individuals and families become more self-sufficient. Together, our agencies provide services to over 14,000 low-income Kansans each year.

KACAP and its member agencies strongly support the dental therapist model. We see dental therapy as a major step toward addressing critical dental shortages in Kansas. As I'm certain that other conferees will also note, the overwhelming majority of Kansas counties are considered to be dental health professional shortage areas. According to the federal government, nearly 650,000 Kansans live in these areas.¹ These shortages mean that thousands of Kansans have, at best, limited access to the dental care they need. Because they are less free to travel distances to get dental care—due to a lack of resources, a lack of reliable transportation, restrictive work schedules, child care demands, or other reasons—low-income Kansans are disproportionately represented among who cannot get the dental care they need. Dental therapists would help fill these gaps—especially for low-income people—by addressing geographic shortages, and by offering more affordable basic dental care.

While KACAP strongly supports legislation to make dental therapy available in our state, we are neutral on SB 312. We recognize that this bill represents an attempt to strike a balance between two important interests: the need to increase access to dental care and the need to ensure that dental care provided is safe and appropriate. KACAP and its members share those values, however, we believe that this bill does not strike the appropriate balance. Specifically, the

¹ U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, *Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Bureau of HealthWorkforce, Designated Health Professional Shortage Area Statistics, First Quarter of Fiscal Year 2018 Designated HPSA Quarterly Summary*, <https://ersr.hrsa.gov/>

KACAP Member Agencies and Board of Directors

Community Action, Inc.
East Central Kansas Economic Opportunity Corporation
Economic Opportunity Foundation
Harvest America Corporation

Mid-Kansas Community Action Program
Northeast Kansas Community Action Program
Southeast Kansas Community Action Program
Wichita Sedgwick County Community Action Partnership

supervision requirements essentially preclude dental therapists from practicing in geographic locations separate from the office of the supervising dentist. Therefore, it does little to address areas of dental shortage in the state, leaving thousands of Kansans without dental care. We encourage members of the Legislature to continue to work on a compromise that more appropriately balances the competing values of access and safety.