

KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

An Organization Dedicated to Improving the Lives of Kansans with Mental Illnesses

Testimony presented to the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
Re: SB 407

Amy A. Campbell – March 11, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to address your committee today on behalf of the Kansas Mental Health Coalition. The Kansas Mental Health Coalition is dedicated to improving the lives of Kansans living with Mental Illnesses and Severe Emotional Disorders. We are consumer and family advocates, provider associations, direct services providers, pharmaceutical companies and others who share a common mission. At monthly roundtable meetings, participants develop and track a consensus agenda that provides the basis for legislative advocacy efforts each year.

The Kansas Mental Health Coalition supports additional hospital beds for youth and adolescents in central and western Kansas.

The shortage of hospital beds and community crisis services for families in the rural and frontier areas of our state create an extremely difficult situation for parents and the emergency response systems in those communities. Who do you call? And what if the people on call do not know how to handle your crisis situation safely? This occurs all too often.

Psychiatric inpatient beds for youth and adolescents are important to the full continuum of care. Having a full continuum of care assures that families can access the care that is needed when it is needed, and avoid ongoing trauma that can leave lasting harm on kids' lives.

We do have concerns that the legislation specifies establishing hospital beds within existing resources.

The fact is, whether building new or remodeling facilities, the cost for psychiatric inpatient facilities has become prohibitive for many hospitals. Today, CMS requires "ligature proof" furnishings and spaces. Kansas knows well the difficulty and expenses associated with meeting these inspection requirements, as the State expended millions of dollars at Osawatomie State Hospital and Larned State Hospital. Even after those expenditure, the Adair Acute Care at Osawatomie State Hospital is the only building that is fully certified.

Hiring and retaining qualified clinical staff is also very expensive. As a result, most hospitals and providers would need to operate a minimum number of beds in order to keep the doors open.

The Coalition is committed to working with the agency and the Legislature to find a way to provide hospital beds, PRTF beds, crisis services and community-based outpatient services to the families of the rural and frontier regions of Kansas. Each of these elements is extremely important, as it simply adds trauma to children's lives to provide only one piece of the treatment puzzle.

Thank you for your consideration,

Amy Campbell

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