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**Testimony to the House Health and Human Services Committee
In Support of HB2281
February 22, 2021**

Chairperson Landwehr and Committee Members,

Our associations fully support the implementation of the 988 suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline in Kansas. Too frequently our officers must respond to assist persons in a mental health crisis. This nationally recognized hotline number and the associated call center staffed by mental health professionals is a critical step to assure a person has an opportunity to seek help either for themselves or for another who find themselves slipping into a mental health crisis. The sooner the person in crisis can connect with professional mental health assistance the more likely a severe crisis requiring a response by first responders can be avoided. More importantly, the more likely the person can be saved from serious harm caused by their own actions or due to their mental health condition. One doesn't have to think too hard about this situation to recognize that a simple nationally recognized phone number will more likely be remembered by a person in a mental health crisis than a ten digit regular phone number.

The bill seems to establish the proper structure of the system for Kansas. We recognize the funding mechanism will be the most difficult path to successfully implementing this program. But these services can positively affect the outcomes for the patient and potentially save the state significant money by diverting the need for emergency commitments if the person is left to slip deeper into their crisis condition.

We encourage the committee to consider the input from the mental health professionals you will undoubtedly hear from to move a solid plan forward for implementation of this system for the people of our state.

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