

KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

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

Written Testimony presented to the House Judiciary Committee
Support HB 2697

Amy A. Campbell – February 17, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to support HB 2697 on behalf of the Kansas Mental Health Coalition (KMHC).

Please support HB 2697 to expand the providers and locations where competency and restoration treatment can be provided. Ongoing workforce and state hospital capacity challenges mean that individuals facing criminal charges are waiting far too long for competency evaluation and restoration treatment. The situation is fundamentally unjust.

We have been participating in stakeholder conversations with KDADS on this issue and endorse the legislation and the Governor's recommended appropriation to expand the provider pool available for mobile competency and restoration. This is a step toward improving the time frame and defining the providers who can deliver services, and the additional environments where these services can occur. If there are additional amendments necessary to facilitate this improvement, and we stand ready to collaborate with other stakeholders on those changes.

One area we are watching closely is the language relating to forced administration of medications and expanding where that takes place. We know that providers are not likely to want to force medications on individuals and believe when and where that can occur should be extremely limited, particularly to facilities where the staff is trained for these kinds of interventions and only in cases of immediate risk.

Thank you to Commissioner Scott Brunner and Secretary Laura Howard for moving forward with legislation. The agency has been extremely pro-active in trying to solve the many complications of a mental health system that has been in trouble particularly since the decertification of Osawatomie State Hospital beds six years ago. The Legislature is taking many steps forward through legislation and funding to improve mental health services for children and adults throughout this state – thanks in large part to the work of the Legislative Mental Health Task Force (2018-2019) and the Mental Health Modernization and Reform Committee (2020-2021).

Please support HB 2697 and please support the Governor's enhancement recommendations for funding this expansion of services.

The Coalition also commends the Kansas Department on Aging and Disability Services and their ongoing communication with our Coalition members. We have seen improved transparency and communication every year. We stand ready to continue to collaborate with the agency to improve the Kansas behavioral health continuum of care.

Thank you for your consideration.

For More Information, Contact:

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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, non-profit and for-profit entities 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. This format enables many groups, that would otherwise be unable to participate in the policy making process, to have a voice in public policy matters that directly affect the lives of their constituencies. The opportunity for dialogue and the development of consensus makes all of us stronger and more effective in achieving our mission.
