

February 23, 2021

SB 238 - In-Person Proponent Testimony with Two Amended Changes
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Chairman Hilderbrand and Members of the Committee – Thank you for the opportunity to address your Committee on behalf of the Kansas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (KS-NASW). Social workers have been licensed at three levels of practice since 1976 - baccalaureate (LBSW), the master (LMSW), and the independent clinical social worker (LSCSW). Licensed Social workers are the largest provider of mental health services and provide more services than all licensed mental health care providers combined in Kansas.

SB 238 proposes three licensing changes for the social work profession:

- Adds a new mandate for supervision of master level social workers to become clinicians.
- Amends Kansas unique requirement for hours of client contact during MSW training from 350 to 200, and
- Permits BSRB to update licensing service definitions in regulations to include telehealth options.

NASW-KS Chapter supports the work of the Special Committee on Kansas Mental Health Modernization and Reform to address recruitment, retention, and staffing shortages. We recommend the following strategies:

Workforce Shortage Solution #1: We ask the Committee **eliminate the additional 350 hours** of direct client contact requirement during the master of social work (MSW) field internship.

- Kansas is the only state in the nation with this additional requirement – (K.S.A. 65-6306 (C)).
- The current statutory requirement creates an incentive for bachelor level students to move to neighboring states for their graduate work.
- SB 238 lowers the standard to 200 hours but eliminating the 350 hours would align Kansas with licensing boards across the country who require the Council of Social Work Education standard of 900 hours.
- Kansas social work graduate programs average 1,200 hours due to this extra 350 hour mandate.

Workforce Shortage Solution #2: We ask the committee to **not adopt the new “Board Approved Supervisor” mandate**. This requirement adds a new layer of cost for a social worker with a graduate degree to achieve their clinical license. During this pandemic our seniors, farmers, families, and schools are struggling with depression, anxiety, and suicide and now more than ever our policies must not place additional obstacles to grow the mental health workforce.

Our concern is this requirement upon supervisors could delay the addition of more clinicians in Kansas. SB 238 requires a LSCSW (clinical social worker) to 1) obtain a BSRB “Board Approved Supervisor” status; and 2) a master’s level social worker seeking to obtain a clinical license would now need to work with a BSRB “Board-Approved Supervisor” or their current supervisor would need to achieve the BSRB mandated requirements.

Currently, only 17 states have similar requirements as proposed in SB 238. This provision requires supervisors:

- 1) complete an undefined number of hours of clinical supervision training as defined by regulation,
- 2) submit an application and pay a fee to get the title, and
- 3) pay for at least three hours of continuing education specific to clinical supervision every two years.

Workforce Shortage Solution #3: KS Chapter supports modernizing licensing definitions to include telehealth service options.

SB 238 permits BSRB to update face to face licensing definitions for social workers and social work students in regulations to include telehealth service options.

Behavioral Health Provider Shortage Creates Barriers to Mental Health Service Provision in Kansas

The 2020 Special Committee on Mental Health Modernization and Reform reported on the shortages of behavioral health professions. The Committee documented difficulties with recruitment and retention of qualified professionals across the mental health continuum of care. The large numbers of retiring baby boomers are compounding the workforce shortage.

Currently, there are rural counties in the state that have no licensed psychologists or social workers.

Licensed Specialist Clinical Social Workers Across Kansas

- 83 – Western Kansas
- 1,672 – Eastern Kansas
- 1,755 – Statewide

Licensed Clinical Social Workers Compared to Neighboring States (2019)

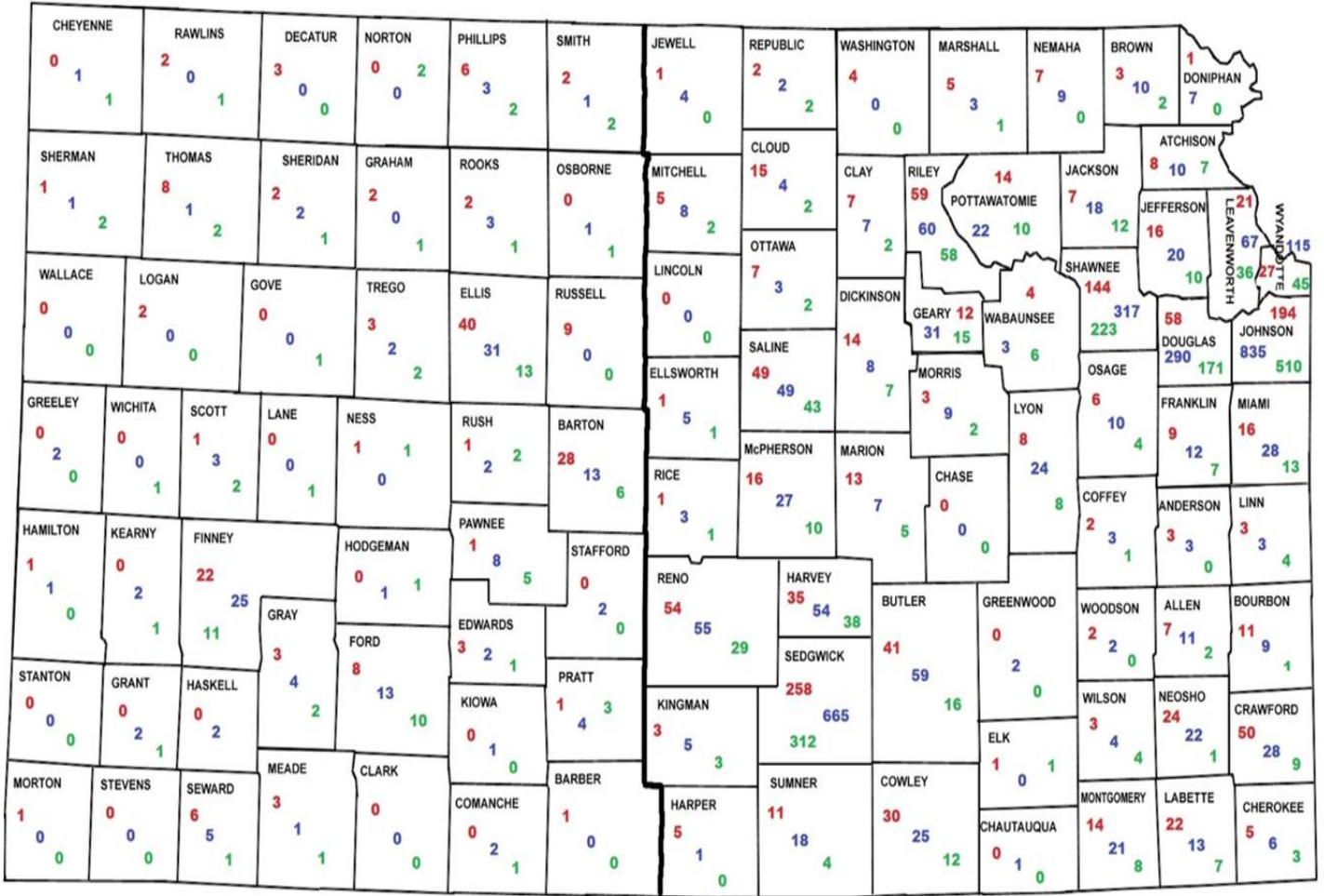
State	Licensed Clinical Social Worker	Licensed Master Social Worker	Total	Percent of Clinical Social Workers of Total Graduate Workforce
Missouri	5939	1857	7796	76 %
Colorado	6090	1612	7702	79 %
Oklahoma	2761	1072	3833	72 %
*Kansas	1755	3169	4916	36 %

Today, Kansas is facing a severe shortage of trained mental health responders. Through SB 238, the Kansas Legislature has the opportunity to increase citizens’ access to mental health care by increasing access to appropriately trained licensed professionals.

Chairman Hilderbrand and Members of the Committee, we ask that you not adopt the two provisions in SB 238 that create additional barriers to becoming a clinically trained social worker. We believe that a system with less bureaucratic layers will increase access to critical mental health services for Kansans.

We believe by amending the **350 hours of direct client contact** and the new proposed **“Board Approved Supervisor Mandate”** from SB 238, this change will encourage social work students to practice in Kansas while increasing the State’s ability to address the behavioral health treatment needs of children and families.

Licensed Bachelor, Master, and Specialist Clinical Social Workers (2019)



Licensed Bachelor Social Workers

Statewide LBSW total=1,414
 Western Kansas LBSW total=73
 Eastern Kansas LBSW total=1,341

LBSW in Western KS: 5%
 LBSW in Eastern KS: 95%

Licensed Masters Social Workers

Statewide LMSW total=3,178
 Western Kansas LMSW total=73
 Eastern Kansas LMSW total=3,037

LMSW in Western KS: 4%
 LMSW in Eastern KS: 96%

Licensed Specialist Clinical Social Workers

Statewide LSCSW total=1,755
 Western Kansas LSCSW total=83
 Eastern Kansas LSCSW total=1,672

LSCSW in Western KS: 4.7%
 LSCSW in Eastern KS: 95.2%