

Testimony before the House Health and Human Services Committee
House Bill 2578
January 30, 2024

WRITTEN ONLY

Chairperson Landwehr and Members of the Committee:

My name is Matthew Schmidt. I am the Chief Executive Officer of Health Ministries Clinic in Newton, Kansas, and chair of the Community Care Network of Kansas board of directors. I am also licensed as a Clinical Social Worker (i.e., LSCSW) in Kansas. Like many community health centers in Kansas, Health Ministries Clinic operates under an integrated care model. Under this team-based approach, patients can access professionals and services like family practice physicians/APRNs, psychiatrists, clinical social workers, dentists, hygienists, pharmacists, diabetic educators, care coordinators, diagnostic imaging, laboratory, translators, and transportation. Research shows that providing integrated behavioral health and primary care results in better physical and mental health outcomes and greater patient satisfaction. This is a good thing.

We value and appreciate the services of our local community mental health center and consider them colleagues. Our community is best served when we find ways to partner together, which we strive to do. We also know that the mental health needs of our community, and indeed our state, require all the support and resources we can muster. Health Ministries Clinic is a critical part of the healthcare landscape of our community, helping increase residents' access to the mental health services they need. In 2023, we provided approximately 57,000 visits to over 15,000 individual patients. During this same period, Health Ministries Clinic provided direct mental health care to more than 2,000 patients—nearly one out of every seven patients seen in our health center.

We are committed to ensuring patients' timely access to comprehensive, quality healthcare services and strive to remove barriers that impact the ability to be seen. We support policies that enhance access. House Bill 2578, however, threatens to deny access by limiting the organizations that the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) can certify as Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs). The bill would allow only community mental health centers (CMHCs) to become CCBHCs, blocking community health centers and other providers of behavioral health services from even being considered for certification.

Community health centers have been delivering mental health services for many years, and our network's mental health services have grown in number and in sophistication. In 2022, Kansas health centers employed more than 133 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in behavioral health services, including psychiatrists, licensed clinical psychologists, and licensed clinical social workers. These professionals already deliver many of the services that CCBHCs are required to offer, including (but not limited to) screening, assessment, diagnosis, monitoring of health



risks, care coordination, case management, medication-assisted treatment, and, of course, primary care services.

We have expanded our mental health offerings because we have recognized the growing need for those services in our communities. Yet Medicaid payment rules mean we are not always reimbursed for these services. Health centers should have the opportunity to seek CCBHC certification and the reimbursement that comes with it, giving them resources to provide even more services and further facilitating access. House Bill 2578, as introduced, would close off that opportunity and would limit the effectiveness of the CCBHC program that this Legislature passed in 2021. We need to ensure the citizens of Kansas have access to all the mental health resources and services at our disposal and not needlessly suppress this.

Sincerely,

Matthew Schmidt, LSCSW
Chief Executive Officer
Health Ministries Clinic