



# Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas

3015 N. MICHIGAN, P.O. BOX 1832, PITTSBURG, KS 66762

Opposition Testimony of HB 2578  
Committee on Health and Human Services  
January 30, 2024

Chair Landwehr and members of the Committee, my name is Eric Thomason. I serve as Vice President of Behavioral Health and Addiction Treatment services for Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas (CHC/SEK). CHC/SEK is a 501(c)(3) public charity, federally qualified health center (FQHC), and Kansas not-for-profit corporation. We operate multidisciplinary clinics located in nine counties in southeast Kansas, but provide medical, dental, and behavioral health services to residents throughout southeast Kansas. We provided 44,158 provider level behavioral health visits during 2023. These services were provided in our schools, jails, and integrated medical centers. In addition to provider level visits, our Community Health Workers (CHWs) provided approximately 19,943 visits accounting for 25,303 unique services. Approximately 85% of these our CHW visits were provided to those suffering from mental health conditions.

House Bill 2578 moves to restrict access to behavioral health services through legislatively limiting those who can obtain certification as a Certified Community Behavioral Health Center (CCBHC). CHC/SEK opposes any reduction in behavioral health service delivery. More behavioral health services are needed in Kansas, not less. Suicide remains the second most common cause of death in those 15-44 years old. Kansas has seen an increase in suicide completion of 6.5% per the Kansas Department of Health and Environmental services Annual Summary of Vital Statistics published in December 2023. Kansas continues to experience greater morbidity and mortality than our neighboring states.

The promised improvements from the CCBHC treatment model has yet to be realized in many communities across Kansas. In southeast Kansas (where we have five CCBHCs), we have seen a rise in drug overdose and suicide completion over the past year. There remains treatment disparities in schools, jails, and in our farming population. Crawford County Kansas has the greatest out of home placement rate for our foster children in Kansas. The answer is not to restrict treatment providers, but to embrace organizations improving their service delivery.

I respectfully recommend:

1. Removal of the word "only" from line 13 in HB 2578.
2. Create a public database to improve transparency in service delivery consistent with original CCBHC implementation proposal.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Eric Thomason', is located below the 'Best Regards,' text.

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