



To: House Health and Human Services Committee

From: Rachelle Colombo  
Executive Director

Date: February 6, 2024

Re: HB 2637, expanding eligibility for Rural Emergency Hospital Licensure

The Kansas Medical Society appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of HB 2637, expanding eligibility for Rural Emergency Hospital licensure. Rural Emergency Hospital Licensure was originally established in 2021 and allowed hospitals with fifty beds located in a rural area to access newly available federal funds by re-organizing and obtaining licensure as a Rural Emergency Hospital. Federal law limited this designation to hospitals meeting the criteria established in 2020 or after.

HB 2637 expands licensure eligibility to hospitals meeting the criteria but established in 2015 or after. This change is particularly relevant as it would allow some Kansas hospitals that closed prior to the establishment of Rural Emergency Hospitals to re-open and serve their communities.

Our state cannot meet the health care needs of our population without a strong network of financially viable community hospitals. The public expects access to hospitals to care for Kansans, but their ability to do so is threatened without all available support. Federal legislation relating to the establishment of rural emergency hospital licensure has expanded since 2021, and HB 2637 allows Kansas hospitals to patients to benefit from this expanded eligibility.

HB 2637 provides even more opportunity for communities to maintain and restore necessary primary and preventative care, chronic disease management and emergency healthcare services by accessing available funding streams.

Addressing the challenges that face healthcare in rural Kansas will require innovation, collaboration, and commitment. HB 2637 is an opportunity to restore community access to health care that rural Kansans depend upon. We respectfully urge your support of HB 2637. Thank you.