



Date: March 11, 2020

To: Chairman Gene Suellentrop and Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

From: Troy Unruh, Mayor of Garden City

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 407

Chairman Suellentrop and Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 407 on behalf of the City of Garden City.

The City of Garden City is in support of SB 407 as it will bring a needed service to a region where psychiatric care is minimally available. The Garden City Police Department (GCPD) routinely transports individuals with mental health needs to either Wichita, Kansas City, Topeka or Denver. Recently, attempts were made to transport individuals in need to Wichita, but facilities there were at capacity and the transport was diverted to Kansas City. The transportation across the state creates staffing problems and additional incurred costs for the GCPD. In addition to the additional staff needs, the long-distance from home creates a sizeable barrier for family and friends to visit the patient. Few visits from family and friends while in treatment can create additional stress on the patients. The increased isolation has a negative impact during recovery.

Over time western Kansas has suffered without the availability for alternative pain control options, and this has led to a significant increase in opioid addictions. This opioid addiction is compounded by the fact that there are minimal available resources for addiction treatment. The high prescription rates have also increased the availability for youth to experiment with pain medication. In fact, the number of overdose deaths quadrupled from 1999 to 2013 for individuals between 12 to 24 years of age. Although Kansas remains below the national average for overdose fatalities, the problem is apparent, and it is growing rapidly.

The addition of psychiatric facilities to Garden City will not only provide a much-needed service to Kansans but will also provide support for residents of southeast Colorado and the Oklahoma and Texas panhandles. The problem that we are facing in western Kansas is not one that is unique to Kansas. Psychiatric services are equally as scarce in the neighboring states. The addition of a facility in Garden City would alleviate problems that are faced throughout our region. In addition to being a location that could serve the region, Garden City has many things that make it an excellent choice for the facility. Garden City has a workforce that is qualified to handle psychiatric patients, a supportive community that values mental health, lodging for visiting families, access to all necessary technology and long-term partners available. Garden City is a strong proponent for SB 407, however the city will need adequate funding to make this a sustainable program.

Based on this testimony, the City of Garden City requests your support of SB 407.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Troy Unruh", is written over a faint, circular official stamp or seal.

Troy Unruh, Mayor  
City of Garden City

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RANDALL D. GRISELL  
CITY ATTORNEY

CITY ADMINISTRATIVE  
CENTER

301 N. 8<sup>TH</sup>

P.O. BOX 998

GARDEN CITY, KS

67846-0998

620.276.1160

FAX 620.276.1169

www.garden-city.org