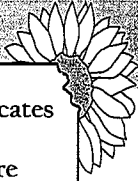


Kansas Advocates
for
Better Care



February 7, 2010

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Rep. Bob Bethell
Chairman House Aging & Long-Term Care
Topeka Statehouse
Capitol Office Room: 55C-S

Dear Chairman Bethell, Vice Chairman Worley and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for hearing testimony this morning on HB 2047. Elders and persons with disabilities receiving long-term care in any setting will have experienced many major life transitions and losses. Their need for access to mental health care is critically important for their mental, emotional and physical functioning.

Kansas Advocates for Better Care strongly supports the provisions of this legislation. We are acutely aware of the lack of mental health assistance for persons living in nursing homes and assisted living and routinely assist families in trying to identify mental health support and resources for a loved one living in a long-term care setting. KABC supports the provisions of this geriatric mental health bill and applaud the access and intervention/treatment for persons using long-term care offered by competent mental health providers.

For many persons living in long-term care settings the ability to access services through the current mental health system is limited due to 1) their level of frailty, 2) their lack of transportation, 3) the lack of qualified personnel within a facility to address their mental health needs, and 4) the stigma associated for elders with requesting help and specifically mental health assistance. Many persons living in facilities have access to support and pastoral counseling, and from social service staff or their designee. Having been a pastor I am aware that my skills were not always up to the needs of my parishioners, and I did not hesitate to facilitate their work with a more skilled mental health professional. Persons in adult care homes are dealing with some of the most significant issues of life, loss of familiar home, loss of spouse, family friends and their social network, end of life contemplations, dependence on others to name a few. Most make the transition with help and support from some corner, many would welcome support to address such major life challenges.

I hope you will look favorably on this legislation and move it forward.

Kansas Advocates for Better Care is a non-profit organization that has been serving the needs of elders and persons with disabilities and advocating for improved long-term care in nursing homes and assisted living facilities for 35 years.

Thank you,

Mitzi E. McFatrigh
Executive Director
785-842-3088 or mitzim@kabc.org

HOUSE AGING & LTC

DATE: 2/8/11

ATTACHMENT # 5

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