

HB 2240 Testimony

March 22, 2017

Senate Judiciary

Sky Westerlund, LMSW

The Kansas Chapter, National Association of Social Workers (KNASW) is the professional association working on behalf of the profession and practice of social work in Kansas. Social workers have been licensed at three levels of practice since 1976. These are the baccalaureate (LBSW), the master (LMSW), and the independent clinical social worker (LSCSW). We are the largest group of mental health providers with over 7400 social workers practicing in the majority of the 105 counties in Kansas. The practice of social work is performed in many fields including adoptions, addictions, aging, child welfare, courts and corrections, corporations and businesses, crisis intervention, domestic violence, early childhood, hospitals and health, hospice and palliative care, poverty prevention programs, mental health, community based prevention, problem gambling, pre-schools and schools, trauma, veterans and military, research and teaching, and more. We work in both the public and private sectors of the economy. Social workers serve thousands of Kansans every day.

KNASW opposes HB 2240.

Our opposition to the bill is because it excludes licensed social workers as potential staff for the proposed crisis intervention centers.

The current definition of who would be considered a “behavioral health professional” will limit the crisis intervention centers choices of who they may employ. They would not be able to employ a master or a clinical social worker, *unless that person was already employed at a community mental health center*. They would not be able to employ a bachelor social worker.

A successful crisis intervention center should be allowed to choose their staff without the restrictions that include some but not others of the same profession. The restriction is embedded in the definition of “qualified mental health professional” (Page 1, lines 35 and 36). The reference of KSA 59-2946(j) includes a master or clinical social worker who is, specifically, employed by the community mental health center. The licensed bachelor social worker is excluded.

The association asks the committee to amend the legislation to be inclusive of licensed social workers. This could be done by adding “licensed social workers” to the list of behavioral health professionals in lines 11-13 and then adding a definition of licensed social workers as defined by KSA 65-6301 and amendments thereto.

Including the work of licensed social workers, crisis intervention centers may prove to be a valuable service in our communities.

Thank you for your consideration.