



January 23, 2020

Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 252

Chairman Suellentrop and Members of the Committee,

The Behavioral Health Association of Kansas (BHAK) is the state's trade organization dedicated solely to substance use disorder treatment and prevention providers seeking integrated behavioral health care. BHAK believes that true integrated behavioral health means access and funding for mental illness and substance use disorder treatment without regard to where a consumer seeks services.

BHAK fully supports Senate Bill 252 and the expansion of Medicaid benefits to thousands of eligible Kansans, particularly for those who suffer from substance use disorders and accompanying mental illness. Other states who have expanded Medicaid report one of the greatest impacts is the expansion of behavioral health services. In particular, we know from preliminary data that the parents of many currently eligible children will become eligible for behavioral health services. These benefits to low-income working families who can access healthcare promotes family stability, employment, and diverts children from the child welfare system.

We are prepared to support the growth of behavioral health services, but we note the already strained system will benefit from greater flexibility. The current Kansas Medicaid State Plan restricts the provision of most mental health services to one provider system only. The restriction of mental health services to only the community mental health center system limits overall system capacity and is a substantial barrier to consumers, particularly dual diagnosed persons in the addictions field. We are not using all of our tools to address the behavioral health crisis. Medicaid expansion will require the expansion of providers to efficiently handle these new populations.

We support Medicaid expansion and lament the years of lost resources and citizens who have gone without behavioral health treatment because we have not yet expanded.

Please contact us if you have any additional questions.

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