



**COMMUNITY CARE
NETWORK OF KANSAS**

Health. Equity. Justice.

To: Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
From: Denise Cyzman, CEO, Community Care Network of Kansas
RE: Senate Bill 129
February 17, 2021

Chair Richard Hilderbrand and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony in support of Senate Bill 129, which would provide for the licensure of dental therapists. I am Denise Cyzman, CEO of the Community Care Network of Kansas.

Community Care represents a network of community-based clinics that specialize in serving our most vulnerable Kansans. Last year, they served one in 10 Kansans. The 292,000 patients seen disproportionately represent the working poor, the uninsured and those who receive health coverage via Medicaid. Clinics provide whole-person care including medical, dental, pharmacy, mental health, substance use disorder, case management and wrap-around services to meet transportation and other social and economic needs.

For many Kansans, finding a dentist for even routine care can be a challenge because of the lack of providers. If they are fortunate to live in a county that has dentists, the challenge remains because so few accept Medicaid beneficiaries. KanCare beneficiaries and those without dental insurance, in particular, struggle to maintain good oral health with such limited options.

Fortunately for them, Community Care clinics provide services regardless of ability to pay. And oral care is a significant portion of the services provided. In 2019, clinics in the Community Care network saw almost 95,000 dental patients during 202,000 total visits. During those visits, 308,000 different services were provided. By treating the patients no one else will accept, these clinics save the healthcare system costly emergency room visits.

But there is so much more the clinics could do if they had more dental providers. SB 129 would provide a welcome solution by allowing supervised dental therapists to conduct specific treatments such as simple extractions and preparation for and placement of fillings. Allowing privileges to mid-level dental providers would significantly increase the number of Kansans served. Perhaps 2,000 to 3,000 patients could be seen in a year by a single dental therapist.

Senate Bill 129 is a practical solution to removing a barrier that limits access to care. Simply increasing the number of qualified dental providers, by establishing the dental therapist position, will help decrease the unfortunately high number of Kansans not receiving necessary oral care.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denise Cyzman".

Denise Cyzman
Chief Executive Officer
Community Care Network of Kansas