



February 4, 2017

To: Chairman Hawkins and Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services,

I am writing as a Kansas physician encouraging you consider the benefits for the citizens of our state offered by the enactment of House Bill No. 2031. This bill concerns a medical service with which I am very familiar, namely the provision of Palliative Care for patients and families in hospital and outpatient settings. Palliative Care is a distinct medical specialty made up of care providers serving as a team to bring medical, spiritual, and psychosocial support for patients and families dealing with complex medical illness. Though distinct from the more universally understood care provided by hospice at end-of-life, Palliative Care grew from the need for the same interdisciplinary approach to care, serving patients far “upstream” in the course of a severe illness. Patients often find themselves confused about choices in a system that doesn’t take the time to listen to them. In our world of fragmented and busy specialty-oriented care, Palliative Care is now often requested by physicians and knowledgeable patients and families to listen and advocate for their needs, as well as provide expert symptom management.

“Knowledgeable” is the key word here, as Palliative Care is still not widely understood by physicians or the general public. Therefore, this bill is designed to accomplish two things:

1. The creation of a palliative care consumer and professional education initiative through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, ensuring accurate information is available about this specialty’s purpose and services, and
2. To form an interdisciplinary advisory council within the Department to advise on matters relating to the development, operation and outcomes monitoring of palliative care initiatives in the state.

As a physician member of Midland Care’s palliative care team in Topeka, I know first-hand the difference palliative care can make in the lives of patients and their loved ones. I ask that you strongly consider the benefit provided to Kansans by the enactment of HB No. 2031.

Feel free to contact me with questions about palliative care services. My cell number is 785-221-7446.

Sincerely,

C. Gregory Nelson, MD

Medical Director, Midland Care Connection, Topeka, KS