

House Bill No. 2031
The Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
Kansas State Legislature
March 9, 2017

To the Honorable Vicki Schmidt, Chair, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding House Bill (HB) 2031.

My name is Matthew Benorden. I have served as a palliative care and hospice chaplain for the past 12 years. I currently serve with Grace Hospice in Topeka, KS. I come as an individual, and not on behalf of Grace Hospice.

HB 2031 would establish the palliative care and quality of life interdisciplinary advisory council within the department of health and environment. The purpose of this council is to develop recommendations and advise the department of health and environment on matters related to the establishment, maintenance, operation, outcomes evaluation of palliative care initiatives within the state, and effectiveness of the palliative care consumer and professional information and education program.

The bill would establish within the department of health and environment a 13-member advisory committee. On or before October 1, 2017, the advisory committee would be required to maximize the effectiveness of palliative care initiatives in the state through consumer and professional information and education.

According to an October 5, 2016, article by the National Cancer Institute, patients who received palliative care along with standard treatment for advanced cancer reported better quality of life and mood than patients who did not receive palliative care.

In addition, patients who received early palliative care also scored better on an assessment of their ability to cope with their disease and were more likely to discuss end-of-life care preferences with their health care team. Of course, palliative care is not just for cancer patients but is offered to all who have a life-threatening illness.

The Kansas motto, as you know, is the Latin phrase “Ad Astra Per Aspera.” It means “To the Stars Through Difficulty.” Unfortunately, many patients with life-limiting illnesses cannot reach the destination of comfort among their stars. And, if they do, it is with great difficulty. I have sat with those who have had that great difficulty. It is nearly unbearable to watch their suffering.

Thereby, I ask the committee to support this bill and report it favorably in establishing a palliative care advisory committee. By doing so, you will allow others to be educated on how to care for patients with life-threatening illnesses and build their patients’ foundations to reach the stars of comfort with less difficulty.

To the Honorable Vicki Schmidt, Chair, and members of the committee, thank you for your consideration in this important topic.

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