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Healthy People Build Strong Communities

Testimony of the Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) to the

Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Proponent for SB 129 • February 17, 2021

Chairman Hilderbrand and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to supply written testimony in support of Senate Bill 129 which provides for the licensure of dental therapists. KALHD is a nonprofit association dedicated to strengthening local health departments for the purpose of improving and protecting the health of all Kansans.

KALHD has a position supporting expanded access to dental care across the state. We believe that dental therapist legislation will increase access to quality, cost-effective dental care for Kansas families. According to data from the American Dental Hygienists' Association, 87 out of Kansas's 105 counties are underserved or unserved when it comes to dental provider coverage. SB 129 will help address this need. In addition, dental therapists provide care at a fraction of the cost a dentist would charge, thereby addressing affordability issues on routine procedures and allowing dentists to prioritize more complex dental procedures.

Local health departments recognize the importance dental care plays in ensuring healthy Kansans. Hundreds of thousands of Kansans lack access to dental care. This legislation will expand access to this key service and do so at an affordable price-point. It is for these reasons that KALHD supports SB 129 and asks that you recommend it favorably.

Respectfully,

Dennis Kriesel

Executive Director, Kansas Association of Local Health Departments