

**Wabaunsee County Health Department
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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**East Central Kansas
Public Health Coalition**

**Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
Testimony on SB160
Local health department; prohibition of accreditation requirements**

February 15, 2013

Madame Chair and members of the committee:

Good afternoon, my name is Janet Wertzberger. I am the administrator for Wabaunsee County Health Department and I am also a registered nurse licensed in the state of Kansas. I stand in opposition to this bill.

Accreditation is a voluntary method of quality assurance to distinguish organizations that adhere to a set of standards. Accreditation is a relatively new concept in the field of public health that has been researched by experts in the field. Standards used in becoming accredited are simply an agreed upon way of doing something using the wisdom of people with expertise in their subject matter. Standards provide a framework for achieving efficiencies and interoperability. They are designed to be voluntary and to offer ways for us to do our work better. The nursing profession, for example, adheres to standards for nursing practice.

Wabaunsee County Health Department, with the support of our County Commissioners, voluntarily entered into various projects that caused us to research ways to standardize the local public health service to be more efficient and interoperable with other local health departments in the East Central Kansas Public Health region and other counties across Kansas. Discussions, meetings, and activities designed to meet the standards opened new doors for collaboration and partnerships. The people of our counties were invited to participate voluntarily to provide their opinions and personal expertise into shaping the list of priorities for health improvement. More citizens and organizations are voluntarily becoming involved at the grassroots level to participate in change of practice to improve the health of the public. Yes, these actions may satisfy the requirements for accreditation but more importantly we are increasing our efficiency and interoperability to serve the people of Kansas.

I respectfully ask that you join hands with me in serving all Kansans with the best that public health has to offer through accreditation and governance at the local level. Please do not allow SB160 to continue.