

**KANZA**

## Mental Health and Guidance Center, Inc.

### Testimony to the House Health and Human Services Committee

February 2, 2017

PROUDLY  
SERVING THE  
CITIZENS OF  
BROWN,  
DONIPHAN,  
JACKSON AND  
NEMAHA  
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SINCE 1963

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PO Box 319  
Hiawatha, KS 66434  
(785) 742-7113

Fax #  
(785) 742-3085

Community Services  
Building  
2291 Linden Rd.  
Hiawatha, KS 66434  
(785) 742-2275

After hours Crisis #  
(785) 742-3666

Holton Branch Office  
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713 Idaho  
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"Offering hope to build  
a better tomorrow."

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is David Elsbury. I am the Chief Executive Officer of Kanza Mental Health and Guidance Center. Kanza is a licensed Community Mental Health Center serving four counties in northeast Kansas including Doniphan, Brown, Nemaha and Jackson counties. All of Kanza's counties served are considered to be rural counties and the total population of the four counties is about 41,000 persons. Kanza provides mental health services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year regardless of ability to pay. In FY 2016 Kanza served about 1600 persons and a large portion of those persons received mediation evaluation and management services.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to you in support of HB 2124 which would amend the Medical Student and Residential Loan Assistance Act to include psychiatry for medical student loan repayment. This amendment would be benefit for Community Mental Health Centers, particularly agencies such as mine that are smaller and experience tremendous difficulty recruiting psychiatrist to hire or contract for specialized psychiatry services.

Kanza as one of the smaller Community Mental Health Centers, as a result, has never employed a psychiatrist during its nearly 54 year history. The Center has always engaged psychiatrists as part-time consultants as well as contracted with advanced nurse practitioners until about ten years ago when it began employing advanced nurse practitioners but continued to contract for psychiatric time. Even with this type of professional relationship, it has become increasingly difficult to engage a psychiatrist for part-time professional services. As a result, Kanza recently began to utilize tele-psychiatry to provide the limited amount of psychiatry services it offers in addition to the services of full-time advanced psychiatric nurse practitioner. Recently, Kanza has recognized that it needs to increase its psychiatric services due to unserved need. This decision will be difficult to accomplish and steps such as HB 2124 will increase the availability of psychiatrists in Kansas which is currently experiencing a shortage of this medical specialty.

The vast majority of Community Mental Health Centers in Kansas employ one or more psychiatrists as well as additional mid-level providers such as psychiatric nurse practitioners and physician assistants. Retaining these doctors in these positions is vital. The presence of the psychiatrist is critical due to level of expertise and training that these professionals bring. Over the last ten to fifteen years, the number of psychiatrists employed in Community Mental Health Centers has shrunk, in part, due to the rising cost of this physician and the high demand for the fewer professionals as well as the fewer number of these physicians present in Kansas as noted in other testimony today. It is critical to enact measures to increase the total number of psychiatrist in Kansas.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I ask for your support of HB 2124. I am available for questions.