

February 14, 2017

Jeanne L Ramos, RDH
Concorde Career College
KCMO, 64111
House Bill 2139
House Health and Human Services Committee

Chairman Hawkins and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jeanne L Ramos and I am a Registered Dental Hygienist licensed in both Missouri and Kansas residing in Overland Park, Kansas. Currently I am a Dental Hygiene Instructor at Concorde Career College and graduated in 1978 from Wichita University, Wichita, Kansas. I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2139.

I am in total support of establishing Dental Therapists in Kansas. Working in private practice for many years I saw people in pain and need of dental treatment turned away due to lack of ability to pay. The dentists I worked for usually donated some free service but could only donate in limited amounts. There are few places to refer these people and even those have long waits. I have actually had patients with severe dental disease request to have all of their teeth extracted rather than live in pain with no care. Instructing now at Concorde Career College I see many more underserved patients who are facing a life without all or most teeth due to lack of dental care services. There is a definite dental access crisis that dental therapists could help eliminate by providing routine care in safety net clinics, schools, nursing homes, rural communities, private practice etc., all under the supervision of a dentist.

Establishing dental therapists will create jobs and grow the Kansas economy. Dentists will be able to grow their practices and see more patients. Dental therapists will be trained right here in Kansas and can return to their hometowns to work. Dental therapists are well-paid professionals, earning between \$60,000 and \$80,000 annually. They can provide routine services and cost less for dentists to employ than other dentists. Adding a dental therapist to the dental team frees up dentists to focus on the more complex procedures, allowing the entire dental team to operate more efficiently. Safety net clinics can stretch funding further to increase the number of patients they serve with the addition of dental therapists. Furthermore, dental therapists will provide high-quality care. Education programs will be accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation, the same agency that certifies dental schools. This means that educational programs for dental therapists will be held to the same standards as educational programs for dentists and dental hygienists. *Concorde Career College would be willing to consider a program in Kansas City, as we are in an ideal position to integrate this curriculum.*

Adding a dental therapist to the dental team will create jobs, improve Kansans' health, and save money. The underserved deserve support. I ask for your support in passing this bill.

Thank you Chairman Hawkins and members of the community for the opportunity to testify.

Jeanne L Ramos, RDH