

February 14, 2017

Sister Janice Thome  
Dominican Sisters Ministry of Presence  
Testimony in Support of House Bill 2139  
House Health and Human Services Committee

Chairman Hawkins and Members of the Committee:

I serve the poor in Garden City and Holcomb. They are fortunate to have dentists close enough to home in order to receive services. Many of the "frontier" counties north and west of us have no dentist or not enough dentists to serve the population. This bill would allow dental therapists to fill that void.

Even in the counties where there is one dentist, families who have no vehicle or one that will not make it to highway speeds without falling apart cannot get to the office in that one town. Having a dental therapist in other towns would assist them in accessing services.

The more locations in which dental services are available, the better served they will be. As dental caries increases the risk of stroke and heart disease, this bill will help Kansans be healthier and save money for the state in the long run.

Since I serve families with children in both of my half-time ministries, I am particularly focused on the need for preventative care. **When I drive a child to Wichita to have "baby bottle mouth" teeth extracted at age three or four, I know that this child's long term health has already been impacted. Having dental therapists available to the family will help these children get the intervention they need before they get to such a point.**

Please do pass this bill to gift us with dental therapists.

Sister Janice Thome  
Dominican Sisters Ministry of Presence  
Parents as Teachers, USD457  
620-521-1387