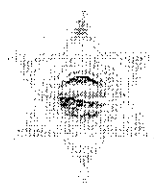


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**Testimony to the Senate Health and Welfare Committee
In Support of SB32
January 19, 2017**

Chair Schmidt and Committee Members,

You may find it unusual for our associations to rise in support of SB32 which adds psychiatry to the postgraduate residency training program. Our reasons for this support are fairly simple. Law enforcement interacts with many people with mental health issues. For the past several years we have been very active in many aspects of the mental health challenges in Kansas. Those range from the Osawatomie State Hospital moratorium on admissions of the mentally ill found to be a danger to themselves or others (today marks the 578th day of the moratorium) to limited local resources to serve those in need of mental health treatment. These issues directly affect law enforcement across the state. Every state and local law enforcement agency we represent will encounter calls from citizens concerned about a person suffering from mental illness. Every jail in the state has inmates with mental health treatment needs.

During this past interim period, our associations were actively engaged with four groups looking at issues surrounding mental health services in Kansas. In addition to that, many of our member agencies are actively engaged with local mental health groups seeking solutions. I also served on the Juvenile Justice Working Group, a group which led to SB367 revising the juvenile justice system. During roundtable discussions with local service providers, which were part of the Working Group, we repeatedly heard the local service providers are unable to handle their current demands for services. It was clear any additional demands on local services must include expansion of available support services for the mentally ill. I also served on a Judicial Council committee on the Emergency Mental Health Commitment bill, another effort to expand local mental health capacity to address the shortage of mental health capacity in Kansas at state hospitals.

Demand for local mental health services continue to increase. This increase has resulted from the Juvenile Justice Reform, diversion of the mentally ill from criminal charges to treatment, substance addiction diversions, difficulty in getting persons into state hospitals for services, as well as increased awareness and public acceptance to seek professional mental health treatment. Law enforcement is also training officers in mental health recognition and directing those persons to local treatment options when appropriate in an effort to keep them out of the criminal

justice system. These are programs such as Crisis Intervention Teams and Mental Health First Aid.

However, the local resources for such treatment has not grown at the pace of demand. The local mental health resource crisis effects every county in Kansas, but is especially difficult to overcome in rural Kansas. The root of the limited resources is complex and include limits on local government funding support compounded by the property tax cap, limited state funding support, cost recovery challenges service providers face, a shortage of service provider facilities, and a lack of qualified people to provide the services.

SB32 will be a small but very important step, in addressing this pressing issue. The shortage of psychiatrists across the state, especially outside the metro areas, has been a topic in every group we have worked with. We encourage you to continue searching for ways to address other factors such as limited local funding, ways to encourage investment in mental health service facilities in rural areas, and also the shortage of mental health nurses, mental health technicians, and other mental health workers necessary to make local programs work.

We are not experts on mental health treatment or the medical profession, but we are experts in the law enforcement interactions with persons suffering from mental health issues. We also have experience in trying to find resources to serve those in need of local mental health services. We know the decision of whether to pass this bill favorably from your committee involves many factors we do not fully understand. But we hope as you hear from experts in those other areas you will find reason to move this bill forward and explore even more solutions.

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