



February 1, 2018

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Neutral Testimony for the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee on Dental Therapy in Kansas

Chair Schmidt and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your attention to the important issue of access to oral health care in Kansas and the role Dental Therapists can play to increase availability of care.

Head Start serves families with children pre-natal through five. One aspect of comprehensive services is health care including oral health. Programs are required to work with families to establish a dental care home and regular care for children beginning at age one or the eruption of the first tooth.

It has been and continues to be very difficult to find dentists in all parts of Kansas who will see children younger than age three. In some parts of the state it is difficult to access a dentist at all. Children in rural parts of the state typically must travel to Kansas City to receive care for oral health disease.

Oral health is known to be a key foundation for positive overall health. Children in families where adults do not receive regular dental care are also less likely to have good oral health. Children with tooth pain are not fully able to engage in learning and experience healthy development.

The addition of Dental Therapist will increase much needed access to both a broader range of ages and hopefully availability across the state.

We urge the Committee work to increased access to oral health services in Kansas by allowing Dental Therapists the ability to provide services in setting where children and families live work and learn such as rural communities, early learning settings, schools and the work place. This provision will further the promise of full and quality health care to Kansas children and families.

Thank you for your attention to this important health care access issue.