



## Testimony to Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee on House Bill 2549

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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, my name is Colin Thomasset. I am the Associate Director for the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc. The Association represents the 26 licensed Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) in Kansas that provide behavioral health services in all 105 counties, 24-hours a day, seven days a week. In Kansas, CMHCs are the local Mental Health Authorities coordinating the delivery of publicly funded community-based mental health services. As part of licensing regulations, CMHCs are required to provide services to all Kansans needing them, regardless of their ability to pay. This makes the community mental health system the “safety net” for Kansans with mental health needs.

The Association appreciates the opportunity to submit this written testimony as neutral on HB 2549.

We feel that expansion of competency evaluations and treatment to be performed at other state facilities may be appropriate to help alleviate the current backlog that exists for these services at Larned State Hospital (LSH). The State should make every effort to ensure that people are not sitting in jail waiting for competency or restoration services.

CMHCs also perform competency evaluations as a service to the district courts, and it is one that many CMHCs spend more on delivering the service than we are paid by the State. There is formal training in forensic psychology offered by the State at LSH and that training is provided to the licensed CMHC psychologists that perform these evaluations.

We hope that with any changes that may occur from the passage of this bill, that this forensic training continues so that CMHCs may be able to continue to provide this valuable service. Additionally, we hope that this would not be the beginning of the end of competency work at LSH. Our CMHCs that serve the western half of the State rely on LSH as a safety net resource for individuals experiencing a mental illness. We can understand the need for flexibility, but it should not be at the expense of the mental health safety net.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.