



# Kansas Sheriffs' Association

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Testimony to the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare  
In Support of HB 2549 - Competency and Elimination of Catchment Areas  
March 6, 2018

Chair Schmidt and Committee Members,

The KSA believes the proposed changes are in KDADS and local entities best interest to better serve citizens with mental health issues and inmates in need of determination of competency ordered by a court. However, the recommended changes will only be positive if they resolve some of the long wait times facing persons held in our local jails awaiting competency determinations and restoration.

County jails have experienced an increase in wait times for both determinations of competency and competency restoration. These wait times mean increased time for these defendants in county jail and a delay of justice for crime victims. Only if allowing both Osawatomie and Larned hospitals to provide these services results in increased capacity of the system and reduces wait times will it be a positive change.

As you can see in the bill, the House removed the provisions eliminating the catchment areas for Osawatomie and Larned State Hospitals. If there is an effort to restore what the House struck from the bill, we want to ensure both hospitals will remain open for service even if catchment areas are removed from State Statute. The Mental Health Task Force study recommends more beds to provide adequate services to our citizens affected by mental illness and we believe those recommendations should be implemented. Clearly more state hospital beds are needed to address the current demands not just a change in catchment areas. Our hope is that the future of mental health care also will include state funded regionalization of these crucial services that are needed closer to the local communities. We also need state supported mental health treatment capacity for those suffering both a mental health crisis and also suffering physical ailments keeping them out of the state hospitals today. The removal of the catchment area provisions has caused us to shift our position on HB2549 from neutral to proponent.

The Kansas Sheriff's Association supports the bill as amended by the House. We thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

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