

**Testimony on Senate Bill 487
Senate Ways and Means Committee**

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Good morning Madam Chair and members of the committee. I am Dr. Lee Norman, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. I appreciate this opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 487 and the critical need of a new facility for the Kansas Health and Environmental Laboratories or KHEL.

At some point, almost every Kansan is served by the work of KHEL. The Laboratory provides screening for newborn infants to analytical results that ensure we have safe drinking water. The laboratory must be equipped, staffed, and available to serve Kansans at their time of need.

The current facility, a former military hospital, is over 60 years old and the renovations to create most of the laboratory space were completed over 40 years ago. The current situation is that these components are either deteriorating or completely failing. There are also inefficiencies in the power supply, air movement and temperature controls in a building of this age. These issues not only have a cost for repairs and inconveniences associated with them, but they also pose safety risks for employees.

Another concern for the former hospital is that there is no efficient way to implement a good work flow process. This means that staff must go in and out of various small labs (formerly patient rooms) and up and down floors to move samples, supplies and equipment multiple times per day. This inefficiency leads to lower productivity and less job satisfaction.

Recruitment and retention of good scientists is critical for continuity and dependability of test results. Most of the staff at KHEL are degreed scientists. It is difficult to encourage these professionals to come to or remain working in a facility that is deteriorating. The professional scientific work force is competitive, and the current scientist want to know they are appreciated for doing good work for society, but they want to do that work in a modern and safe facility.

I know the committee has several alternatives to discuss regarding the Docking Building and the new KHEL laboratory. For KDHE, either option of a stand-alone building or being in the Docking Building is acceptable solution.

Thank you for your time.