

Tonya K Ricklefs, PhD  
Licensed Master Social Worker  
Kansas State Approved Mediator and Conciliator  
Shawnee County Resident

Proponent Testimony- HB 2208

Tonya Ricklefs, PhD, LMSW  
Social Work Department Chair, Washburn University

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to speak today in support of HB 2208. I am the Social Work Department Chair at Washburn University. Today I want to share with you the positive impact that the passage of HB 2208 will have on social work students. Students who are the future of the social work profession in the state of Kansas.

Updating the 'face to face' requirement for direct service hours to include telehealth services and dropping the Kansas requirement from 350-200 direct client contact hours will remove an unnecessary burden faced by our students. These additional requirements are above and beyond the 900 hours required by the Council on Social Work education unique to Kansas and place a large hurdle in the education of social work students in a state already facing a shortage of master level practicing social workers.

Delivering services via telehealth is a service delivery model that will not be disappearing after the end of the Covid pandemic. It is an effective way to deliver services in rural areas of Kansas, as well as to clients in urban areas struggling to access services. Because of Kansas's requirement that direct service be defined as face to face, and master level students requirement to achieve 350 direct client contact hours, students when asked to provide telehealth services during their field placements they want to focus their precious time practicing skills that will get them to the end goal of graduation and state licensure.

I fully support high educational and ethical standards for students and practicing social workers, but those standards need to have a rationale that supports why they exist. No other state expects 350 direct client hours and other states have already defined telehealth as direct service. With the growth of online social work programs our Kansas universities are facing growing competition for students in an already shrinking possible student pool. Adding additional standards that our students must meet creates problems for future recruitment for Kansas universities.

In summary, dropping the direct client face to face expectations for social work students will greatly support our Kansas students in achieving their educational goals. Many of our students and faculty would like to thank you for your consideration of this support of our students in their journey to serve the citizens of Kansas as practicing social workers. Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.