

Testimony related to HB 2281 and 988 Implementation

Presented to: House Health and Human Services Committee
By: Andrew Brown, Commissioner of Behavioral Health Services
Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services

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Chairwoman Landwehr and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on behalf of the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) about this bill. At KDADS, Suicide Prevention is an ongoing effort within my commission. Funding for the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL)** in Kansas has been a recommendation of multiple reports to the Kansas Legislature over the last several years and were featured in the Mental Health Task Force reports in 2018 and 2019, as well as this year's report from the Interim Joint Committee on Mental Health Modernization and Reform. KDADS has been working to develop suicide prevention infrastructure in our state that will support the implementation of 988 in Kansas and help prepare NSPL crisis centers for the transition of the system to the new number.

988 had not yet been signed into federal law, when KDADS submitted budget enhancement requests for FY22/FY23. As such consideration had not been given to the funding of 988 in the Governor's Budget Recommendations. This administration is supportive of the federal 988 law and wants to see 988 implemented well in Kansas. As a result, KDADS applied for and received funding to assist the state in planning for 988 implementations. That grant award notice was recently received, and KDADS is in the process of completing initial steps related to the objectives of the grant. The timeline for that 988 planning project is for it to be completed by October. The final date for telecoms to implement the switch to 988 is in early July of 2022 or the beginning of FY23. Many of the leading telecoms have already enabled 988 for their customers, but the federal government will not begin promoting 988 to the public until next summer. This grant's objectives are to:

- Develop a clear roadmap for how Kansas will address key coordination, capacity, funding and communication strategies that are foundational to the launching of 988 which will occur on or before July 16, 2022.
- Plan for the long-term improvement of in-state answer rates for 988 calls.

KDADS expects there to be a significant increase in call volume to current the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline as indicated by national subject matter experts and SAMHSA. Currently KDADS has a NSPL expansion grant that was awarded last year which is intended to help Kansas raise its in-state answer rate from approximately 60% to 80% by the end of this year. The NSPL in-state answer rate in January was 72%, so we are making good progress towards that goal. Much of this progress however will be in vain without investing further in capacity building.

KDADS recently published the new 2020-2025 State Suicide Prevention Plan. This plan highlights the need for state infrastructure development around suicide prevention to reduce suicide attempts & deaths in Kansas. One of the components that is needed is a robust crisis service delivery system that begins with 988.

This year the Governor has included in the administration's budget for KDADS several key pieces from the Mental Health Modernization & Reform recommendations, one of which is \$5 Million SGF for Mobile Crisis Response Services. These services will work with 988 to provide local teams that can respond to 988 callers in need of additional support. 988 and Mobile Crisis Response components are important to the future implementation of CCBHC's are required to provide 24/7 crisis services to the public.

KDADS and the Governor's Office is supportive of the work of the Interim Committee on Mental Health Modernization and Reform and creating a robust continuum of care, which is why we have been working to make progress on those goals and fund recommendations from the report. The federal act enabling 988 nationwide does not provide federal funding to states to support it but instead establishes the authority of states to assess 988 fees on telephone services to fund 988 programming. We take no specific position on the funding mechanism incorporated within the bill and support the Legislative policy discussions in discerning how 988 should best be funded in Kansas and by Kansans.

988 is a vital component to the modernization effort and will have a significant impact on improving access to care, reducing hospitalizations and institutionalization of Kansas struggling with severe mental illness as well as those experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

KDADS believes many of the NSPL crisis centers will require significant technical assistance and additional funding to be able to meet the increase in call volume anticipated with 988. We believe it will take at least 6 months prepare these centers and possibly recruit new call centers to achieve a 90% in-state answer rate of the 988 calls originating from Kansas. We support a timeline that doesn't wait for 988 to go live nationwide before we begin building the infrastructure needed to respond to Kansans in crisis.

KDADS is making significant strides in improving support for community-based services for behavioral health. Further progress on modernization and reform is possible with the support of the Governor's Office and the Legislature working together to empower the agency to fulfill its mission in service to Kansans. With the executive reorganization creating the Department of Human Services, we have an additional opportunity to better align state resources and infrastructure to prepare for implementation of 988 and many other recommendations.

Thank you for allowing us to provide proponent testimony on this important issue.