



**COMMUNITY CARE
NETWORK OF KANSAS**
Health. Equity. Justice.

Testimony of Sonja Bachus, CEO, Community Care Network of Kansas

sbachus@communitycareks.org

HB 2444 – Mental Health Intervention Teams

Opponent

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Chair Williams and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present our testimony on House Bill 2444, establishing the mental health intervention team program. My name is Sonja Bachus, and I am CEO of Community Care Network of Kansas. Community Care is the primary care association for the state of Kansas, representing a network of 32 health clinics delivering care at over 100 sites across Kansas. The majority of our members are federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) or FQHC look-alikes, as designated by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Together, this network of clinics served 334,066 unique patients through more than 1 million patient visits in 2022.

Not only are these clinics an important part of the state's healthcare system, they represent an increasingly important part of the state's behavioral health system. In 2021, these clinics provided behavioral health services in nearly 104,000 patient visits. That number grows every year, and since the start of the pandemic, at least 10% of these clinics' services have involved the delivery of behavioral health services. Health centers provide these services as part of a proven model of integrated care, simultaneously addressing both physical and mental health needs. A significant body of research demonstrates that when mental health and primary care needs are addressed in an integrated setting, both physical and mental health outcomes are significantly better than when these services are provided separately.

Our member clinics also are experienced at providing care in school settings. The majority of our FQHC and FQHC look-alikes provide some form of care in dozens of school-based sites. This care runs the gamut from dental and vision screening services to full primary care and behavioral health services. In 2021, six of our members reported making behavioral health care services available in the 126 school sites where they offer services. Most of these are the result of longstanding relationships that health centers have established with school districts.

We support the permanent funding of mental health intervention teams. The model can be effective in addressing mental health issues among students. Community mental health centers (CMHCs) have

demonstrated their effectiveness in providing school-based care, but so have federally qualified health centers and FQHC look-alikes. House Bill 2444, by establishing CHMCs as the only behavioral health providers who can participate in and be funded for MHITs, threatens to restrict, rather than expand, the availability of mental health care provided in schools. Community Care recommends that the committee remove the language that restricts MHIT participation to community mental health centers. Doing so would ensure the widest possible access to behavioral health care for school children across the state.