

Testimony in Support of SB 404

February 4, 2024

Chairwoman Gossage and the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare,

As the Chief Health Officer at Health Partnership Clinic and a practicing pediatrician, I am writing to express Health Partnership Clinic's support for SB 404 which allows expedited partner therapy for sexually transmitted diseases. This bill allows health care providers to treat the sexual partner of a patient they have diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease (STD) and applies to adults and adolescents aged 16 and older without performing an examination.

This legislation is important to protect the health of Kansans, including the youngest and most vulnerable among us, newborns. Untreated sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can lead to fertility problems, premature labor, and infections in newborns that cause lasting complications. Sexually transmitted infections are on the rise in Kansas and have nearly doubled in the past decade (KDHE). This bill is an important tool to reduce this trend.

Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) is safe and effective. Studies show that patients whose partners receive EPT were less likely to be reinfected with an STD. This type of legislation is not new as 46 states already have legislation allowing the treatment of sexual partners of patients who have been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease with no serious adverse events reports (CDC).

Health Partnership Clinic provides medical, dental, and behavioral health services for patients regardless of ability to pay. This includes testing and treatment of STIs. Our patients face many barriers to care, including financial and transportation barriers. Most of our patients work at jobs where they lose income if they need to take off work to come to an appointment. They may not be able to take off work for an appointment to get treated after their partner notifies them that they tested positive for an STI. As a pediatrician working in Johnson County, Kansas, I frequently see asymptomatic adolescents who are found to be infected with sexually transmitted infections on routine screening. It is not uncommon to see an adolescent who is reinfected by a partner who was unable to get treatment in a timely fashion. These adolescents would benefit greatly from expedited partner therapy and potentially avoid future infertility. In addition, I have seen more babies born to mothers who were positive for syphilis in the past few years than I have in my entire 20+ year career, leading to prolonged hospital stays and multiple blood draws needed before their first birthday.