



## Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc.

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### **Testimony to House Federal and State Affairs Committee on HB 2146**

February 14, 2025

Chairman Kessler and members of the Committee, my name is Kyle Kessler, and I am the Executive Director of the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc. The Association represents the 26 licensed Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) in Kansas that provide behavioral health services in all 105 counties, 24-hours a day, seven days a week. In Kansas, CMHCs are the local Mental Health Authorities coordinating the delivery of publicly funded community-based mental health services. As part of licensing regulations, CMHCs are required to provide services to all Kansans needing them, regardless of their ability to pay. This makes the community mental health system the “safety net” for Kansans with mental health needs.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2146.

The CMHCs are the backbone of the mental health safety net in our state. CMHCs provide outpatient services to patients living with severe and persistent mental illness and children/youth with severe emotional disturbance. CMHCs provide individuals the opportunity to improve their quality of life while continuing to remain in the community, in the least restrictive environment possible. By statute, CMHCs also act as gatekeepers to the state mental health hospitals.

In 2018, the Legislature passed HB 2194, which created the statutory mechanism for revenues from lottery ticket vending machines to be used for crisis stabilization centers and clubhouse model programs. This provided ongoing, and sustainable funding for programs and facilities that help individuals stabilize and recover from their mental health or substance use disorder issues, and help the State reduce its reliance on our already heavily-burdened state mental health hospitals.

Our crisis programs provide a model of care that provides a “port of calm” for patients and should be replicated where possible across all communities in Kansas. Further, the passage of the Kansas Crisis Intervention Act in 2017 allows for targeted interventions and emergency care

and treatment for individuals experiencing crisis due to mental illness, substance abuse, or a co-occurring condition.

The original cap on the transfers of \$8m was a good compromise at the time since lottery ticket vending machines were new, and our crisis centers were in the early stages of being built out. At that time, we had programs operating in Wyandotte and Johnson through Rainbow Services Inc. (RSI), as well as Sedgwick, Shawnee, Ellis, and Saline counties. Since then, we have added more programs in Douglas, Riley, Crawford, Finney, and Harvey counties, and additional CMHCs are in the early planning phases of implementation. While our programs may be headquartered out of one county, as with many of our CMHCs, their crisis programs and services serve numerous surrounding counties with 24/7 availability. As demand continues to grow, our Association continues to work with CMHCs and our partners at the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) to identify areas of need around the state that could utilize additional crisis resources.

House Bill 2146 would increase the cap on funding transfers from the lottery vending machine revenue, and enhance our ability to create and support a robust crisis system of care, consistent with our Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) requirements, and support more programs across Kansas.