

Proponent Testimony
HB 2365 - establishing the south central regional mental health hospital
House Health & Human Services Committee
Monday, February 17, 2025

Chairman Carpenter and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for having a hearing on HB 2365. HB 2365 would create a new state agency designated as the South Central Regional Mental Health Hospital under the jurisdiction of the Secretary for Aging and Disability Services. This new state psychiatric hospital would primarily serve the South Central counties in Kansas in cooperation with the existing state hospitals in Larned and Osawatomie. Expanding inpatient bed capacity was included in recommendations from the 2018 Mental Health Task Force report and KDADS requested funding in the FY 2023 budget to build a regional state hospital. HB 2365 would authorize the operations of the hospital envisioned by stakeholders and funded by the Legislature.

The South Central Regional hospital will serve adults committed for involuntary mental health treatment under the Care and Treatment statute and criminal defendants needing competency services as an extension of the state security hospital. The bill updates statutes involving Larned State Hospital and Osawatomie State Hospital or State Psychiatric Hospital to include this new facility located in Wichita, Kansas. HB 2365 also designates the catchment area for the South Central Regional Mental Health Hospital to include Sedgwick, Butler, Cowley, Harvey and Sumner Counties or as otherwise defined by regulations. Section 5 of HB 2365 updates the statute to clarify that the Secretary of KDADS can allow admission or transfer of patients between state psychiatric hospitals outside of the county catchment areas if there is insufficient capacity or resources at one state hospital.

The Legislature approved funds for construction in FY 2023 and Sedgwick County contracted with the Design Architects in December 2023 to complete the construction design and prepare bidding documents. The County completed acquiring property at the corner of Macarthur and Meridian in South Wichita on August 29, 2024. The County issued a request for proposals for a general construction contract in October 2024 and awarded the contract to Key Construction in December 2024. Clearing the site began this month and construction is expected to be complete by the end of October 2026. County will transfer ownership of the building to KDADS by the end of 2026 and the first patient will be admitted in January 2027.

HB 2365 also renames Parsons State Hospital and Training Center to Parsons State Hospital (Section 3, Updating K.S.A. 39-1401 (m)). The term "Training Center" is indicative of a time when the primary goal of the treatment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities was to teach them basic skills. Parsons State Hospital provides a wide array of psychological services that encompass the entire person and address not only current behavioral issues but also past trauma. Renaming the facility as Parsons State Hospital is a more accurate representation of the range of services provided on campus and people with intellectual disabilities statewide.

KDADS and our partners in Sedgwick County have been working on the design and construction of this new state mental health hospital for two years. This project has been a joint venture with Sedgwick County acquiring property, architectural services, and the general contractor to build the facility. Once the building is substantially complete, Sedgwick County will transfer the building to KDADS to operate the hospital within our system of state mental health hospitals. The funding for construction of the hospital has been appropriated to KDADS including the initial operating costs for the facility. That included \$15.0 million from the State General Fund appropriated in FY 2023, 2024, 2025 and proposed for FY 2026. The project also includes an additional \$26.5 million in FY 2024 to authorize building the full 104 bed design for the building and \$25.0 million in SPARK funding for the project.

The South Central Regional Mental Health Hospital will have 104 beds to serve adults in mental health crisis and criminal defendants awaiting competency services. This additional capacity in our state system will directly impact community hospitals, Community Mental Health Centers, law enforcement and local jails. These are all locations that hold or treat patients while they are waiting for admission to one of the existing state hospitals. Adding 52 beds to serve adults in mental health crisis with acute inpatient care will directly impact wait time that is often uncompensated care provided by community hospitals. The 52 forensic treatment beds also will directly impact the time defendants spend waiting in jails for competency evaluation and restoration. While KDADS has authority to reimburse \$100 per day for waiting time in jails, faster admission to a state hospital and additional capacity to restore defendants to competency will help accelerate criminal court cases.

This project has the support of stakeholders across South Central Kansas. The Governor formed a 15 member Advisory Panel made up of Sedgwick County officials, law enforcement, mental health providers, business leaders, and area legislators to study the inpatient needs, coordination with other services in the community, developing pathways for behavioral health workforce, and engaging the community. After 18 months of monthly meetings the Panel recommended the suggested catchment area, the combination of acute mental health treatment and forensic treatment, developing explicit agreements with law enforcement, fire and emergency management resources in Sedgwick County. The Panel also received input from several public meetings to share the building design, gather concerns about the location of the hospital site, and describe the treatment program and security approach at the hospital. The effort applied to gathering community support has kept the community informed and established a working rapport with key partners critical to the successful launch of the hospital.

Authorizing the South Central Regional Mental Health Hospital in statute this session will give KDADS time to establish the operational and accounting structure for the hospital well before construction is complete. KDADS has appointed an acting Superintendent to lead the project, recruit the leadership team, and develop the programming and procedures. We have also hired a facilities director to oversee the construction. The team, including staff at Larned and Osawatomie State Hospital, are working on building the clinical program, hiring plan, and other policies and procedures to be certain the hospital can be licensed and start on the path toward being accredited.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2365. I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Respectfully,

Scott Brunner
Deputy Secretary, Hospitals and Facilities
Kansas Department for Aging & Disability Services