



COMMUNITY CARE NETWORK OF KANSAS

To: House Committee on Health and Human Services
From: Aaron Dunkel, VP of Regulatory and External Affairs, Community Care Network of Kansas
RE: HB 2236 – Mental Health Intervention Team
March 4, 2025

Chairman Carpenter and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity for the Community Care Network of Kansas to submit written testimony in support of HB 2236, allowing school districts to partner with an MHIT provider to ensure students can get year-round mental health care. I am Aaron Dunkel, Vice President of Regulatory and External Affairs for Community Care. We are a statewide association serving 25 health centers and community-based clinics providing care at more than 90 sites across Kansas. Clinics in this network serve anyone, specializing in providing care to the most vulnerable and underserved Kansans. In 2023, our network provided more than 350,000 Kansans with whole-person care, including medical, dental, mental health, substance use disorder, pharmacy, and enabling services to meet transportation and other social and economic needs.

Behavioral health services are becoming a more significant part of what our members do. The number and share of patient visits to member clinics for mental health services have grown steadily in the last few years; data reported to the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) show that in 2023, more than ten percent of patients' visits to our FQHC members were primarily for behavioral health reasons, with as many as 20 percent addressing behavioral health needs in the context of providing primary care or other services, resulting from the health center's integrated care approach. Those same reports show that health centers employed nearly 100 licensed mental health professionals in Kansas. Our health centers' integrated care model recognizes physical and behavioral health issues interact and emphasizes the importance of addressing them simultaneously. Research shows that such integrated care improves both physical and behavioral health outcomes.

Recognizing the importance of school-based integrated care, our members have opened health center sites in schools. At least six health centers operate 59 sites recognized by HRSA as school-based health centers. Some of these sites are open only a few hours per week and may offer only behavioral health services or dental screenings, but more than half are open at least 40 hours per week, and most of those offer a full complement of integrated physical and behavioral health care. Health centers are established mental health providers in several schools and trusted physical and behavioral health partners in several school districts in the state.

The Mental Health Intervention Team (MHIT) program recognizes the importance of such care in schools, and our clinics support making it a permanent program in statute. Evidence shows that the program works. We support HB 2236's intent to make it an ongoing program in law instead of a program that relies on budget provisos each year for its continuation. Recognizing that health centers are an essential part of the state's mental health network, the bill confirms a role for health centers in the program. For those reasons, we support the passage of HB 2236.