

# KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

An Organization Dedicated to Improving the Lives of Kansans with Mental Illnesses

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## Testimony presented to the House Social Services Budget Committee Neutral – HB 2314

*Amy A. Campbell – February 12, 2025*

Thank you for the opportunity to address your committee today on behalf of the Kansas Mental Health Coalition (KMHC).

The KMHC recommendations are based on the strategic plan to prioritize the Behavioral Health Continuum of Care – identifying gaps and barriers to care that are harmful to individuals and lead to destructive cycles of hospitalization or incarceration and waste public resources. State policies should be strategic instead of reactive, striking a balance between community-based services and inpatient care.

Past strategic planning endorses this approach, including the 2018 and 2019 Mental Health Task Force Reports and the 2021 and 2022 Reports of the Special Legislative Committee on Mental Health Modernization. The good news for this Legislature is that many of these recommendations have been implemented or are in process.

The Kansas Mental Health Coalition continues to support expanding access to peer support specialists, peer mentors, and parent peer programs throughout Kansas. As Kansas invests in services and programs for behavioral health, peer support should be a part of those plans. As utilization of peer services grows, meaningful employment is available to individuals with lived experience who are able to graduate from the training programs.

Hiring peer support / peer mentors could strengthen our overall workforce in many venues beyond traditional peer work sites. Another way to improve access to peer support is through expansion of Clubhouse Programs and Consumer Run Organizations with additional funding and support.

KMHC is neutral on HB 2314 because it includes elements that do not align with National Model Standards for Peer Certification. We believe it is important to learn from the experiences of other states and programs to establish impactful services. Perhaps as we learn more about the bill, we can adjust our testimony.

- What is the purpose of limiting hours by statute?
- Why does the bill focus on background requirements and not on the services to be provided? National standards recommend that background checks are up to the employer.
- According to the bill, backgrounds will be checked and provided to a third-party contractor, however, the bill does not define disqualifying offenses. It simply states “Information obtained from checks conducted under this subsection shall be used for the purpose of determining qualification for certification.”

KMHC supports the work of the Peer Services subcommittee of the Governor’s Behavioral Health Services Planning Council and this legislation does not seem to align with their work. Peer support is a very important service that should be expanded, but the services should work in conjunction with other community based treatment to provide the best outcomes for the individual and to provide employment that leads to independence.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Kansas Mental Health Coalition**

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