



4111 W 6<sup>th</sup> St. Ste A  
Lawrence, KS 66049  
785-843-2636

33391 Lexington Ave. Ste C  
De Soto, KS 66018  
913-586-9797

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To: Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

From: Dr. Kailah Willms, DDS

Free State Dental, Owner-Partner

Good morning Chairman Gossage and committee members, thank you for allowing me to speak today on the SB 31: Kansas Dental Practice Act. My name is Dr. Kailah Willms, and I am here on behalf of myself, my colleagues and partners, Dr. Brad Adams and Dr. Nealy Newkirk, and our practice, Free State Dental. Our local, four doctor private practice was founded over 30 years ago in Lawrence, KS and currently serves almost 13,000 patients in Lawrence and the surrounding communities. Additionally, this past October, we opened a second office in De Soto, KS at the request of the community, based on the anticipated growth and need for more access to dental care. While each owner dentist in our office consistently spends time in both of our locations, we also firmly believe it be important for an owner dentist to always be present during patient care hours.

I can confidently speak for our practice when I say serving our patients and neighbors are the reasons we exist, and the center of our core at Free State Dental. Without hesitation, we donate substantial time, expertise and financial resources to support our local community groups and organizations, in addition to our active patient base. We work collaboratively with other local providers and agencies to ensure we are doing our part to strengthen the place we call home. We are privileged to foster a wonderful connection with our patients- we have celebrated, grieved and shared some of life's most momentous occasions together. We provide compassion and competency in some of their most vulnerable moments. In return for their trust in us, our patients receive consistency in their providers and feel confident knowing that their dentist has a continual understanding of their unique goals, circumstances and health. Our patients know that their dentist is invested in their best interest, the quality of care we provide, and the reputation of the office we operate. While we proudly hang our names on the door, the patients of Free State Dental do not need to see them to know who owns our practice, our actions and our hearts speak for us.

I can only speak from personal experiences, but there are opposite recurring feelings that come from the patients who transfer their care to us from a DSO: Feelings of overwhelm and frustration. Many patients report significant obstacles obtaining records in a timely manner. Challenges where they felt they spent more time discussing money with the financial department, than they did receiving information about their oral health. They were overwhelmed after being presented with large, expensive treatment plans that did not address the concern or priority of the patient. As further evidence of these observations, we have interviewed dentists who have left DSOs to pursue careers in private practice that describe pressures from their office leaders to perform treatment they were not comfortable with, in treatment times they did not feel adequate. These dentists ultimately left believing that the patients were not receiving the type of care they deserved.

For all of the reasons I have stated previously and because we believe patients should be the focus, we at Free State Dental oppose SB 31. Thank you.