

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

Kansas Legislature
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
C/O Chairperson Sen. Beverly Gossage
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: Opposition to Senate Bill No. 31.

Dear Chairperson Gossage and Members of the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill No. 31, which seeks to eliminate K.S.A. 65-1435(d), commonly known as the “20% rule.” The 20% rule is a protective measure that requires the owner dentist to be onsite at each practice they own providing healthcare or overseeing treatment of other fully licensed practitioners at least 20% of the time, or roughly 1 day per week in a typical Monday-Friday work schedule.

I believe private practice dentistry is vital to patient care. When a dentist is both an owner and a health care provider, they have vested interest in both the quality of health care provided and the financial security of their business. They care about the health care provided every day because they plan on helping the patients’ needs over an extended period of time. Private practice dentists also have complete autonomy over the treatment offered to patients. No matter what testimony you hear from others, corporate dental offices have their own treatment and billing guidelines that are not personalized to patients’ needs and desires.

The organization behind this bill is called the Association of Dental Support Organizations (“ADSO”). The ADSO is a lobbying organization that wishes to expand the presence of corporate owned dental practices. I believe this bill will negatively affect the quality of care provided to patients and will not achieve the intended goal of improving access to dental care.

In the state of Kansas, Dental Support Organizations already operate legally under KSA 65-1471. They exist to support the operation of the business side of dentistry. This bill intends to allow a provider to own as many practices as they want and, in turn, allow a DSO to run and operate those facilities however the DSO “owner” sees fit. This is not in the best interest of Kansans.

Corporate-owned dental offices are often part of a private equity investment. Private equity exists solely to prioritize profit, even over patient care, leading to inferior treatment for patients. These practices tend to focus on maximizing revenue rather than building strong relationships between patients and their providers. This leads to frustrations with billing practices, frequent changes in the dentists and hygienists, and an overall dissatisfaction with the care received.

A false promise these organizations make is that they will expand care in rural Kansas. Corporate-owned dental practices very rarely end up in small towns and underserved communities. A large corporate-owned dental office (Aspen Dental) already has a presence in the state. Their locations include: Kansas City, Olathe, Overland Park, Topeka, Manhattan, Wichita, and Hutchinson. None of these markets would qualify as rural or underserved.

Additionally, one of the major drawbacks of corporate-owned dental offices is their high turnover rate for dentists. Because these offices typically do not provide long-term stability for their staff, patients are often left without continuity in care. This harms the doctor-patient relationship and undermines trust in the care provided. Patients need the comfort of seeing the same dentist over time, especially for ongoing treatment and preventive care.

Expanding the presence of these types of corporate practices will not increase access to care in a meaningful way. Instead, it will likely exacerbate the existing problems by prioritizing production, reducing the quality of care, and contributing to a fractured healthcare experience. Rather than furthering corporate interests, we should be supporting independent dental practices that focus on providing personalized, high-quality care and fostering long-term patient relationships.

I urge the Committee to vote against Senate Bill 103 and consider alternatives that will truly enhance access to dental care while preserving the integrity of patient care. The well-being of patients should always be the priority, and this bill does not serve that purpose.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how we can work together to ensure the best possible care for our communities.

Sincerely,

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