



# Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc.

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## Testimony to House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee On House Concurrent Resolution No. 5032

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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, my name is Colin Thomasset, I am the Policy and Research Analyst for the Association Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc. The Association represents the 27 licensed Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) in Kansas who provide home and community-based, as well as outpatient mental health services in all 105 counties in Kansas, 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

In Kansas, CMHCs are the local Mental Health Authorities coordinating the delivery of publicly funded community-based mental health services. The CMHC system is state and county funded and locally administered. In Kansas, you first must be designated by your County to serve as the CMHC to the county residents, then you must secure a license from the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS), to become the publicly funded CMHC and recognized as such by the State of Kansas. Consequently, service delivery decisions are made at the community level, closest to the residents that require mental health treatment. Each CMHC has a defined and discrete geographical service area. Together, they employ over 4,500 professionals. The CMHCs provide services to Kansans of all ages with a diverse range of presenting problems. Together, this system of 27 licensed CMHCs form an integral part of the total mental health system in Kansas. As part of licensing regulations, CMHCs are required to provide services to all Kansans needing them, regardless of their ability to pay. This makes the community mental health system the "safety net" for Kansans with mental health needs. Collectively, the CMHC system serves over 123,000 Kansans with mental illness.

The Association is supportive of House Concurrent Resolution 5032; we believe that implementation of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) programs across the State have achieved positive outcomes and that the State should encourage adoption of such programs. Community based mental health treatment is in fact the best use of resources to ensure individuals with mental illness receive the treatment they need, and CIT programs help divert people from the criminal justice system and towards these community based services.

According to the National Council for Community and Behavioral Healthcare, over 1 million arrestees every year have a serious mental illness. We believe CIT programs afford officers with a new set of response options to enhance traditional law enforcement, and encourage strong collaborative ties with the CMHCs. National data has illustrated the outcomes associated with CIT programs are substantial, including fewer officer injuries, fewer SWAT call-outs, reduced arrest rates, and increased access to mental health services.<sup>1</sup> Considering the substantial benefits these programs bring to communities, we encourage adoption of this resolution.

Thank you for your support of mental health care and treatment for all Kansans, and the adoption of House Concurrent Resolution 5032. I am happy to stand for any questions.

<sup>1</sup> The National Council for Community and Behavioral Healthcare. [http://www.thenationalcouncil.org/galleries/resources-services/files/Essential Elements Final.ppt](http://www.thenationalcouncil.org/galleries/resources-services/files/Essential%20Elements%20Final.ppt)