



UNITED TO GROW
FAMILY AGRICULTURE

House Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: HB2139 AN ACT concerning Licensure of Dental Therapists

February 14, 2017

Chairman Hawkins and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB2139.

Kansas Farmers Union stands in support to HB2139.

On behalf of the family farmers, ranchers, and rural members of the Kansas Farmers Union, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding House Bill 2139. Our members believe that access to oral health care is essential to a strong quality of life throughout Kansas. For that reason, we support this bill, which would allow dentists and safety net clinics to hire dental therapists and improve access to dental care in rural Kansas.

Kansas faces a critical challenge. 87 of our state's 105 counties are designated as dental workforce shortage areas, and 14 Kansas counties do not have a dentist at all. Rural communities struggle to recruit and retain medical and dental professionals. This creates challenges for rural Kansans who are trying to access regular dental care and maintain good oral health.

Dental therapists are a commonsense solution to this problem. Just as mid-level providers have greatly improved access to medical care in rural communities, dental therapists working under the supervision of a dentist will be able to help more rural Kansans receive the dental care they need. Dental therapists will be able to work under the general supervision of a dentist to travel to communities that do not have a dentist, alleviating transportation-related barriers for their patients. We urge the members of this Committee to support this measure.

House Bill 2139 is an opportunity to expand access to rural health care and to help make rural communities vibrant. On behalf of the members of the Kansas Farmers Union, thank you for the opportunity to support House Bill 2139.

Founded in 1907, Kansas Farmers Union is one of the state's oldest active agricultural organizations. Our primary goal is to sustain, strengthen, protect, and enhance the economic interests and quality of life for family farmers and ranchers and their local communities.