



KANSAS CHAPTER

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

February 5th, 2020

House Insurance Committee Testimony in Support of HB 2459

Chairman Vickrey and Members of the Committee,

The Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (KAAP) represents over 90% of the practicing pediatricians in the state. KAAP has the fundamental goal that all children and adolescents in Kansas have the opportunity to grow safe and strong. It is with this goal in mind that we want to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2459.

HB 2459 would enact the Kristi L. Bennett mental health parity act and limit utilization reviews under certain circumstances, including when patients experience suicidal ideation and/or substance use disorders. Kansas Pediatricians support policies that increase access to mental health services and resources for children and their families, which is why we urge your support of this bill. This legislation is an important step in reducing the stigma surrounding mental health and suicide and seeks mental health parity by covering brain health just as insurance provides coverage for physical health. Furthermore, with the dramatic increase in youth suicide, as well as a significant percentage of Kansas kids and families struggling with substance abuse, this legislation is crucial in seeking to solve these issues.

This legislation ensures that “the medical necessity of any treatment shall be determined by the treating provider in consultation with the patient.” As physicians, we believe the most important decisions affecting our patients’ mental health and well-being—and often their life—should be made by physicians and their patients, not by insurance providers. This bill would allow timely access to medically necessary treatment and limit unnecessary delays, which are not only an inconvenience, but can sometimes mean the difference between life and death.

We acknowledge and applaud the bipartisan work that has gone into this legislation, and believe its passage is essential in supporting the mental health of Kansas kids and their families while also supporting a whole person care model, of which mental health is key. Thank you for your time and attention. We welcome any questions you might have and are happy to serve as your resource on all pediatric issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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Legislative Coordinator
Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics