

To: Members of the Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee

**From: Rennie Shuler-McKinney, MS, LCP
Director of Clinical Services, Behavioral Health
AdventHealth Shawnee Mission**

Date: February 24, 2021

RE: Senate Bill 238

On behalf of AdventHealth Shawnee Mission, I submit the following testimony in support of **Senate Bill 238**.

AdventHealth Shawnee Mission has been serving our community since 1962 and is the largest provider of health care in Johnson County. We are proud of the services we provide at our large Behavioral Health Unit at our main campus in Merriam.

Increasing access to mental health services in Kansas is critical. We need to increase the number of clinically licensed individuals to increase mental health services. In Kansas, the current number of licensed clinicians is not sufficient.

My experience as Director of Clinical Services has given me an understanding of how difficult it is recruit and retain a Behavioral Health workforce. In Johnson County, I see firsthand the need for more social workers, therapists, and counselors to meet the needs of our patient population and to provide timely access to these services.

Senate Bill 238 reduces certain requirements for licensure and changes clinical supervision hours which would result in an increase of the number of clinicians. Reducing the number of clinical hours from 4000 to 3000 still provides adequate clinical supervision to assist the professional toward functioning independently. This would help to increase **social workers, master's level psychologists, counselors, marriage & family therapists, and addiction counselors**.

Supporting workforce efforts is important as we have openings with sometimes limited applicants. This bill would create more clinically licensed applicants.

We are located near state line so expanding out-of-state temporary permits to practice would benefit our area as we have individuals living and working in both Kansas and Missouri.

I was honored to represent the Kansas Hospital Association (KHA) on the statewide **Special Committee on Mental Health Modernization and Reform** this past year. It's great to see our work resulted in recommendations included in this bill.

The pandemic has resulted in an increase in stress and anxiety. We must create opportunity and an environment to grow our workforce to care for our community.

In 2020, over 2200 individuals were hospitalized on our inpatient Behavioral Health Unit and we had over 7400 visits to our intensive outpatient program, helping over 650 community members. We hope to continue to build on our behavioral health services and we believe this bill will help us to increase access to care for Kansans.

Thank you for considering **Senate Bill 238**.

Thank you for your service to our state.