



506 3rd Street  
Tribune, Kansas 67879

620-376-4221  
Fax 620-376-2406

---

Written Testimony before the House Health and Human Services Committee  
House Bill 2578

January 30, 2024

Chairperson Landwehr and Members of the Committee:

By offering mental health services through our clinic, we will fill an important gap and help to meet the unique mental health needs of a rural community like ours. Our clinic is building the capacity to deliver integrated primary care and behavioral health care, meaning that we can and will address primary care and mental health needs simultaneously. It is not uncommon for us to identify an underlying mental health need when we are treating a patient who has come to us to address a physical health issue. When that happens, we can begin to address the mental health need at that time. Given the relative the lack of other nearby options, it is important for us to offer these integrated services in our clinic.

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to House Bill 2578 because the bill threatens to decrease, rather than increase access to mental health care. The bill would limit eligibility to receive certification as a certified community behavioral health center (CCBHC) only to community mental health centers, closing the door to this certification for other types of behavioral health providers. Clinics like ours that provide mental health services would not have the opportunity to attain this certification, closing off the ability to provide and be reimbursed for many critical behavioral health services.

I'm personally and professionally in favor of any efforts to improve mental health access in the state of Kansas. As I write this, we currently have a fifteen year old individual with suicidal ideations in our rural, critical access hospital emergency room. This young person is attended by a family physician. The only emergency mental health services available to this patient are through telemedicine and the nearest in person mental health provider, who may not be the most suitable to care for the patient during this crisis, is more than an hour away. We have had a teen suicide in a neighboring community in the last 48 hours.

We have a mental health crisis in the state of Kansas and across the nation. Anything that limits access to mental health resources in the state, such as HB 2578, does not help our ability to care for patients. Patients with mental health needs exist all across the state and present in the primary care clinic, in the rural emergency room, at Federally Qualified Health Centers and to area mental health centers. We must remove barriers to care and meet patients where they are in our clinics and in the community. House Bill 2578 creates barriers and limits access to needed care. Please do not consider enacting this or any legislation which places further restrictions on who and when we can care for these patients who are very much in need.