

Kansas Chapter
National Association of Social Workers
...advocating for the practice and profession of Social Work...

Testimony: HB 2368

February 25, 2013

House Health and Human Services

Presented by Sky Westerlund, LMSW

The Kansas Chapter, National Association of Social Workers (KNASW) is the professional association working on behalf of the profession and practice of social work in Kansas. Social workers have been licensed to practice at three levels of expertise since 1976. These are the baccalaureate (LBSW), the master (LMSW), and the independent clinical social worker (LSCSW). There are over 6000 social workers practicing in the majority of the 105 counties in Kansas. The practice of social work is performed in many fields of interest including adoptions, addictions, child welfare, corrections, domestic violence, hospitals and health, hospice and palliative care, mental health, community based prevention, problem gambling, schools, veterans and military, and more. We work in both the public and private sectors of the economy.

HB 2368 is implementing a component of the 1992 federal law (P.L. 102-321) that created what is now known as SAMHSA, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The law is a massive government program that supports substance abuse and mental health prevention, intervention, and research.

The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) states that 6 out of 10 persons with a substance abuse problem also suffer from another mental illness. This is commonly known as an individual with co-occurring disorders. The most effective intervention is to treat both conditions in an integrated manner. Addressing co-occurring disorders is a centerpiece in the Governor's new Mental Health Initiative.

In this moment of reconfiguring the membership of the Governor's Mental Health Planning Council, it would be beneficial to include representation of individuals who can provide treatment for co-occurring disorders of both mental health and substance use disorders as well as individuals who have or had such a dual diagnosis. Including these persons will result in a council that is balanced and more accurately reflective of the people who need and seek care in our state.

We request a balloon amendment to include representation of individuals who diagnose and treat mental, which includes substance use disorders as well as individuals who either have or are recovering from co-occurring disorders. We also request the new language that includes a representative of a behavioral health advocacy group be clarified to mean either the group's executive director or board of directors chair or president be the designated representative on the council.

Thank you.

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