

**Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
Testimony on SB160
Local health department; prohibition of accreditation requirements**

February 14, 2013

Madame Chair and members of the committee:

The Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) is opposed to SB160, which would prohibit local health departments from seeking accreditation.

Public health accreditation is a relatively new concept; accreditation is not. Many organizations that provide public services are accredited; some examples include hospitals, law enforcement agencies, and emergency medical services. The national non-profit organization, the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), was established in 2007 to develop the standards and measures to be used to accredit public local, state, and tribal health departments. Over the course of several years, PHAB used input from public health professionals to develop the standards by which public health departments are measured when seeking accreditation. Those standards were finalized and published in 2012.

Accreditation is a positive advancement in the field of public health. It provides a means for a public health departments to identify performance improvement opportunities, enhance management, develop leadership, and strengthen relationships with members of the community. It demonstrates the capacity of the public health department to deliver quality public services.

While we feel strongly that accreditation is a positive goal for local health departments to work toward, it is currently a voluntary process. Accreditation in no way interferes with local control of policy making; rather, the accreditation standards support the existing authority and statutes of the jurisdiction of the area served by the health department. In Kansas, local health departments are part of county government and, by statute, are governed by the Board of County Commissioners. The decision to seek accreditation should be made at the local level.

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