

**Written Testimony to the House Committee on Health and Human Services Regarding Senate Bill 32:
Medical student loan agreements for psychiatry.**

Representative Hawkins, Representative Concannon, and distinguished members of the House Health and Human Services committee, I humbly thank you for affording me this opportunity to share my testimony today in support of this bill. My name is Alex Germann and I am merely a first year medical student at KUMC, far from being a doctor, with little clinical experience. I am not the most intelligent, the most informed, nor the most charismatic student – just an average M1 who cares enough to stand up for others in a noble fight. Although I am insignificant, what I have to say is far from inconsequential, as many lives may be changed for the better with the desired outcome I seek here today.

I personally am not going into the field of psychiatry, nor into primary care, rather I intend to pursue a career in surgery. However, this does not mean that I do not understand the importance of primary care or mental health. Indeed, I believe these areas of medicine are of the utmost importance. This is why my friend and colleague, Daniel Ortiz, and I founded the Psych Interest Group at KUMC, after we discovered that there were no campus organizations dedicated to exposing students to a career in psychiatry, nor was there a group dedicated to informing students of mental health issues and providing/directing students to mental health resources. For example, this month we will be conducting mental health screening to KUMC students and providing them with resources for mental health needs in an attempt to raise mental health awareness and ensure they know where to find help if they need it.

As I am sure that you are all aware, and what Mr. Ortiz has touched on, is that there is an abysmal shortage of psychiatrists in Kansas, and that all but five counties are federally-designated shortage areas, my own county of Chautauqua County included. He has also stated some of the statistics concerning the egregious waiting times and inadequate treatment. I hope that you are also cognizant of the fact that people suffering from a mental health illness contribute more than twice as much to healthcare system burden and costs as a mentally healthy patient. I have family members that can attest to this fact, as well as myself, as our family has a history of mental health issues. Not only would extending KSML to include psychiatry help those in need of mental health treatment, but it would also be cost-effective by diminishing the strain to the healthcare system in both cost and office visits, and at no extra expense as the current KSML stands today. If that is not enough to convince you to pass this bill, consider the fact that you are ensuring that these psychiatrists are staying in Kansas and practicing where it is greatly needed, improving both the mental and physical well-being of Kansans.

I come here today to implore you to do the right thing for the people of this great state and pass this bill. There is nothing to lose from it, and you only have to gain from it. If you pass this bill, so many people will have access to mental health care who otherwise would not have had it before. You would indubitably be fulfilling your duties by doing these people a great service. I graciously and humbly thank you for your time and attention.

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