

# KANSAS MENTAL HEALTH COALITION

An Organization Dedicated to Improving the Lives of Kansans with Mental Illnesses

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## Testimony presented to the House Social Services Budget Committee Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services Budget

*Amy A. Campbell – February 15, 2024*

Thank you for the opportunity to address your committee today on behalf of the Kansas Mental Health Coalition (KMHC).

**A Public Mental Health Crisis and a Workforce Crisis:** Mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers are facing serious workforce challenges that were made substantially worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. Kansas must consider action to expand our workforce and fully compensate those who are providing these services, whether they are clinical professionals, peers, mental health technicians, case managers, or others. We recommend the Legislature investigate potential partnerships with additional educational institutions to build this workforce and to support our workforce needs, create career pathways and streamline reciprocal licensing statutes. It is important to acknowledge that Medicaid Expansion would have a strong impact.

KMHC is pleased to bring testimony today encouraging this committee to continue the effort to improve Kansans access to important mental health and substance use treatment by supporting the following:

1. **KMHC supports the funding recommended by the Governor for \$40 million to establish the Local Government Housing Security Grant Fund.** This is one time funding to provide matching grants to local governments to establish local housing resources. Cities are struggling to increase access to affordable housing while also addressing public safety concerns associated with unhoused people. People who are unhoused or lack stable housing and those leaving jails, prisons, psychiatric facilities and nursing homes often need supportive housing. The agencies that provide this support often encounter barriers when a person is ready to engage in treatment and supports because of their past interactions with law enforcement. All too often we are providing housing vouchers to Kansans with disabilities but there aren't any homes available to use the vouchers. The need is growing among our veterans, patients leaving hospitalization or nursing facilities, and aging Kansans. This is a nationwide issue that is not going away and we urge the Legislature to take action.
2. **KMHC supports the funding recommended by the Governor for a State Housing Supports Director to facilitate and oversee Housing Supports Programs.** This position would be responsible to establish partnerships to maximize the impact of state matching funds for housing programs for people with disabilities, in addition to coordinating state and federal resources.
3. **Please add the agency request for funding for Behavioral Health Commission staffing (\$285,445 SGF/\$570,908 AF)** for the CCBHC, Mobile Crisis Response, Nursing Facility for Mental Health (NFMH) Pre-Litigation Settlement Agreement requirements, and the 988 program implementation.
4. **KMHC supports enhancements recommended by the Governor to fund a Family Support Coordinator.** This would provide coordination and support for the Parent Peer Support, Youth Leaders in Kansas, and build family supports for children with Severe Emotionally Disturbed (SED) diagnosis and Children in Need of Care.

5. **KMHC Supports \$1.5 million recommended by the Governor to cover treatment costs associated with Family Treatment Courts.** Cowley County, Lyon County, and Miami County are implementing family treatment courts beginning in September 2024. These evidence-based programs are effective at helping individuals into recovery and reducing out of home placements and incarcerations.
6. **KMHC supports enhancements from the State Institutions Building Funds for priority rehabilitation and report projects.** Projects for Osawatimie State Hospital include replacing the voltage electrical system. While KMHC does not have a position relating to razing buildings, we do support any maintenance and improvement projects that enhance patient and worker safety and quality of care.
7. **KMHC supports statewide adjustments to state employee pay as recommended.**

## OTHER ISSUES

**Expand the cap on funding for Crisis Stabilization Centers:** Continue to expand community crisis locations in regions across the state including co-located substance use disorder (SUD) services with sustainable funding. There is designated funding for these services from the Lottery Vending Machines, but we have nearly reached the statutory cap. Please support legislation increasing that cap in order to fund additional crisis stabilization centers and fund the newly authorized Crisis Intervention Centers that will be able to care for short-term involuntary patients. The percentage of uninsured served within more intensive community treatment programs means that these programs struggle for sustainability.

**Expand the cap on Clubhouse Program Funding:** The 2018 Legislature established state funding for Clubhouse Model mental health services that support the Clubhouse Model Program (Wichita Breakthrough Club) as an effective part of the continuum of care and allow for expansion to communities across the state that determine both a need and capacity to develop Clubhouse model services for people with severe and persistent mental illness. These programs are succeeding but the allocation from the Lottery vending machine funds are approaching their cap. Please support legislation expanding the cap so more programs can be established.

**Substance Use Treatment** – Please consider ongoing improvement to reimbursement rates and programming for substance use treatment. It seems that year over year, the funding for treatment is not fully discussed in the Legislative forum. However, treatment saves lives and helps keep families together.

**Provide for continued public/private partnerships for local psychiatric inpatient beds to alleviate the growing demand for state psychiatric hospital beds.** The State Institution Alternative contracts provide the state with options to alleviate waiting lists while offering quality care to patients in accredited facilities. Expanding these contracts must be supported as our ability to add capacity in state hospitals is severely limited.

**Expand Peer Support:** The Coalition continues to support expanding access to peer support specialists and peer mentors throughout Kansas. As Kansas invests in services and programs for behavioral health, peer support should be a part of those plans. As utilization of peer services grows, meaningful employment is available to individuals with lived experience who are able to graduate from the training programs.

The Coalition commends the Legislature for implementing continued improvements to the behavioral health continuum of care. We thank the Kansas Department on Aging and Disability Services for their ongoing communication with our Coalition members.

Thank you for your consideration.

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