



**Testimony to House Health and Human Services Committee
on House Bill 2373**

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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, my name is Michelle Ponce, and I am the Associate Director for the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc. Our Association represents the 26 licensed Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) in Kansas that provide behavioral health services in all 105 counties, 24-hours a day, seven days a week. As part of licensing regulations, CMHCs are required to provide services to all Kansans needing them, regardless of their ability to pay. This makes the community mental health system the “safety net” for Kansans with mental health needs.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee today in support of the ideas behind HB 2373, to ensure access to crisis services for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD).

For years, we have had conversations between the mental health and developmental disability systems and with State agencies to identify ways that the two systems could work together to best meet the needs of consumers with dual diagnoses. However, there continues to be more work to do.

While Community Developmental Disability Organizations, (CDDOs) are the experts in providing services and supports to individuals with IDD, CMHCs possess expertise in providing crisis stabilization and response services as well as de-escalation techniques. To serve individuals with the highest needs, it requires both systems working together and joint application of their unique skills and capabilities.

An important component in development of this program will include authorization by the Medicaid program to ensure a funding mechanism for direct service provision as well as infrastructure development and the required ongoing training and consultation.

Looking forward, we welcome the opportunity to work with the IDD providers to continue planning efforts to ensure crisis services are available to meet the complex needs of this population.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee today.