



**Testimony of Charles McKinney, Clerk County Commissioner
Before the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
In Opposition of House Bill No. 303
March 29, 2021**

Member Counties

Barber

Barton

Clark

Ellis

Finney

Ford

Gove

Grant

Gray

Hamilton

Harper

Haskell

Hodgeman

Kearny

Lane

Logan

Meade

Morton

Ness

Norton

Rawlins

Rice

Russell

Rush

Scott

Seward

Sherman

Stanton

Stevens

Thomas

Trego

Wallace

Wichita

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chairperson Hilderbrand and Members of the Committee:

Kansas Legislative Policy Group (KLPG) would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill No. 303. KLPG is a non-partisan organization comprised of elected commissioners representing the collective interests of 33 rural Kansas counties.

Senate Bill No. 303 prohibits the restricting of visitors for residents of county homes for the aged or patients in county hospitals and would permit residents and patients to waive city, state or federal restrictions on visitors that are imposed to control transmission or prevention of an infectious disease. We oppose Senate Bill No. 303.

The COVID-19 virus has placed counties in the unique position of protecting their resident’s welfare during a pandemic. Protecting employees and vulnerable residents and patients has been a top priority for our hospitals and care facilities. Visitors improve a patient’s or resident’s wellbeing and we need to find ways to allow loved ones to visit safely, but this legislation is over-reaching. It impacts a county’s ability to respond to public health emergencies and may impede on the rights of others seeking to avoid exposure to infectious diseases, potentially creating liability for a county.

Senate Bill No. 303 will have costs for extra staffing and protective measures like; PPE, physical environment protections and sanitization, space conversion for social distancing, screening of visitors and after visit testing.

Additionally, Senate Bill No. 303 doesn’t address the ability of facilities to establish protections regarding visitation hours, number of visitors, relationships of visitors or even specified visitation days. Limits to visitation days can be important to accommodate staffing requirements that may be needed to address resident/patient movement and access controls. Limitations on the number of visitors will be necessary for many of the same reasons, in addition to private room sizing.

KLPG urges the Committee to direct KDHE to develop prevention protocols and improved guidance for visitation policies following best practices, to balance the need for reducing transmission of infectious disease with the benefits of having loved ones’ present. We ask that you not advance Senate Bill No. 303. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to the Committee.

Charles McKinney
President
Kansas Legislative Policy Group