



KHA's Capitol Comments
August 19, 2025

The Special Committee on Health and Social Services Meets

Today, the Special Committee on Health and Social Services, chaired by Representative Will Carpenter (R-El Dorado), met. The committee is focused on the rising and continuing costs of the supplemental nurse staffing agencies at state hospitals. The committee asked conferees for lists of ideas to help with the costs and said their goal is to explore those as they head into building next year's budget.

The committee heard from the Kansas Legislative Research Department on the [2024 House Subcommittee Report](#) and previously implemented ideas. The committee heard from Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Deputy Secretary Scott Brunner about the current costs and contract staffing ratios. The agency highlighted possible solutions, including passing House Bill 2237 to allow permanent flexibility in bonus programs, continuing cost-of-living adjustments, nursing incentive programs, scholarships for students going to work at state hospitals with a service commitment agreement and apprenticeship programs.

Ashley Byram, with Osawatomie State Hospital, gave an update on the state hospital in which she serves as superintendent. Byram presented the current patient population, services and staffing shortages, as well as what they are doing. The committee members inquired about the 40 patients awaiting admission to Osawatomie, including the requirements for admission and the availability of geriatric psych beds. Byram highlighted they have fewer patient options for discharge planning. Byram also noted the possible impacts of limiting contract staffing, including longer wait times, reduced beds, reduced safety, more incarceration, greater strain on other settings and job losses. [View Osawatomie slides here.](#)

Larned State Hospital Superintendent Lindsey Topps presented to the committee, emphasizing staffing shortages, clinical, including nursing professionals and services in relation to patient needs. She next stressed what is at risk if limiting the ability to cover minimum staffing needs, including limited ability to respond to medical emergencies, safety concerns of existing staff, increased demand on community providers such as law enforcement and emergency rooms, and delayed admissions and stabilization of those in mental health crisis. [View Larned's slides here.](#)

The committee next turned its attention to the higher education community. Blake Flanders with the Kansas Board of Regents presented on nursing programs, noting that approved seats have increased by 867 in the last five years; however, enrollments are declining. The program has experienced a bounce-back from 2022 to 2024. He emphasized NCLEX pass rates are two percent higher than the national average. He encouraged the Kansas State Board of Nursing to consider additional advertising regarding NCLEX passage rates. He mentioned nurses' wages are increasing due to shortages, and while nursing instructors have seen additional dollars, it has not translated to nursing salary increases. Some colleges have expressed concern about the negotiated agreement for instructors. Flanders suggested recognizing the need for more market influence. In addition, he pointed out the KU Nursing Workforce Center is working on a transfer portal for nursing students. He called attention to the legislative investments made to date, including the nursing program expansion in 2006, and funding for programs in Fort Hays State University, Washburn Institute of Technology and Emporia State University. Service scholarships were noted as having high levels of bureaucracy, despite a very low default rate, and were suggested to be cumbersome.

Kansas Association of Community Colleges Executive Director Heather Morgan appeared before the committee, emphasizing that many nursing students needed learning accommodations, entrance exams and NCLEX pass rates and suggested a need for more academic preparedness in K-12. She expressed a willingness to consider more flexibility in nurse educator minimum requirements and stated that exemptions are currently allowed by the Kansas State Board of Nursing. Others appearing before the committee from higher education included: Greg Nichols, president of Salian Technical College, and Matt Lindsey, president of the Kansas Independent College Association.

The committee spent the afternoon hearing from the stakeholder community, including the Kansas Hospital Association Director of Workforce and Health Care Policy Jaron Caffrey. Caffrey highlighted KHA workforce initiatives and suggested future workforce solutions to include allowing part-time students to access service scholarships, the need for allied health investments, staffing agency fairness, streamlining of credentialing, protections for health care workers, attracting and retaining health care educators and medical students and expanding earn-while-you-learn pathways.

Additional stakeholders appearing before the committee included:

- Kyle Kessler, Association of Community Mental Health Centers
- Michelle Ponce, Kansas Behavioral Health Center of Excellence
- Wes Cole, Governor's Behavioral Health Services
- Amy Garcia, Kansas Nursing Workforce Center
- William Nusser, City of Larned

The committee is slated to meet again tomorrow.

KHA-PAC Festivities at Convention

Do you have a fabulous silent auction item you would be willing to share with the Kansas Hospital Association Political Action Committee during the convention? The time is now to get your silent auction items ready for a big year for the KHA-PAC.

Whether it's related to a special team, activity, event, tickets or a stay at your getaway spot, we want your auction items today!

Our Auction will be going digital this year, so we are excited to have people in the room at convention, and those who are supporting online, join in our KHA-PAC Silent Auction activities.

Additionally, we will again be doing the Wine and Bourbon pull, so feel free to donate or stop by and pull a wine and bourbon at the KHA-PAC booth.

To sign up for silent auction items or wine and bourbon, along with a reminder e-mail for you while you are packing, please sign up here: [PAC Sign-Up Form](#).

For questions, please contact [Tara Mays](#).