

**Testimony on:**

**HB 2372**

**Presented to:**

**House Health and Human Services Committee**

**By:**

**Cathy Harding**

**Executive Director**

**Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved**

**February 5, 2014**

*For additional information contact:*

*KAMU • 1129 S Kansas Ave., Ste. B • Topeka, KS 66612 • (785) 233-8483*

Mister Chair and members of the House Health and Human Services Committee, I am Cathy Harding, Executive Director for the Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved (KAMU). I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to HB 2372.

KAMU has been the Primary Care Association of Kansas for 23 years. As the Primary Care Association, KAMU, represents 43 primary care safety net clinics, 21 of those clinics provide dental care. KAMU and our members believe Kansas should be a state where all individuals have access to comprehensive, affordable and quality dental care. Our 21 member Safety Net Clinics that provide dental along with their 6 additional satellite sites provide Kansans a total of 27 dental clinic access points.

KAMU's safety net clinics are the only avenue many uninsured and underinsured Kansans have for access to dental care. Good oral health is a determinant in overall health. Poor oral health can complicate chronic conditions such as COPD and diabetes, and it is often overlooked as a source of infection in the body.

The reality is that tooth decay is totally preventable. Cavities and tooth loss are not a rite of passage or a way of life; they are a sad testament to the preventative care many, many Kansans do not receive.

Water fluoridation is an important part of prevention. It is the most preventable measure communities can take to ward off tooth decay.

This public health intervention is especially important for people who cannot afford or otherwise do not have access to regular, routine dental care. In some cases, fluoridated water is the only consistent decay prevention they get.

While nearly all toothpaste contains fluoride, people still benefit from fluoridated water because the two work together: fluoride in the water mixes with the saliva to fortify the tooth continuously, while toothpaste is a twice daily topical application. Even with other sources of fluoride, water fluoridation still reduces tooth decay 25 percent over a person's lifetime.

To continue to protect the oral health and the overall health of our most vulnerable Kansans, I urge the committee to support community water fluoridation and to vote against HB 2372.

Thank you Mister Chairman and members of the Committee for considering this request.