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**House Higher Education Budget Committee  
Wichita State University Budget  
January 31, 2025**

Chair Howe and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony on the Wichita State University budget. My name is Tanya Dorf Brunner, and I am the Executive Director of Oral Health Kansas, Inc. We are the statewide advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the importance of lifelong oral health by shaping policy and educating the public.

As Wichita State University considers a feasibility study to create a dental school in Kansas, we want to share a few considerations that come from our experience as consumer oral health advocates.

It is important to ensure that all Kansans have access to comprehensive oral health care. We receive frequent calls from consumers asking for help in finding dental care. The majority of the calls come from families of people with disabilities, people who have Medicaid coverage, and people who live in rural areas.

To that end, we would like to see any feasibility study include provisions to address the most urgent dental issues in the state:

- A future dental school should be a Medicaid provider. As a state-funded school, it only makes sense for the school clinic to be a provider of state-funded dental insurance, which is Medicaid. The Medicaid dental provider network is small, and a dental school serving as a Medicaid provider would sustainably increase the capacity. The current Advanced Education in General Dentistry program at WSU does not accept Medicaid in their clinics, so the Medicaid status of a future dental school at WSU is a real issue.
- A future dental school should focus on recruiting students from rural communities and ensuring students have externship rotations in rural areas. Evidence shows that students from rural areas return to rural areas and that students who receive their training in rural areas stay there after completing their training.

Finally, we ask that if a feasibility study for a future dental school is to be launched, members of the dental community including Oral Health Kansas are a part of that study. As an organization that is dedicated to improving oral health in our state, especially for the most underserved communities, we have a unique perspective to offer that can strengthen any plans to create more capacity in the dental provider network in our state.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director  
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