

**Testimony on
HB 2752/Geriatric Mental Health Act**

Social Services Budget Sub-Committee

**By Secretary Kathy Greenlee
Kansas Department on Aging**

March 13, 2008

Chairman Bethell and Members of the Committee:

Since becoming Secretary, I have consistently heard from seniors and their advocates that geriatric mental health services in this state are inadequate. I have had the opportunity during the past year to testify two times regarding HB 2236, a bill that also addresses geriatric mental health. During an interim legislative budget committee hearing last December, SRS Secretary Don Jordan and I both appeared to demonstrate our support for addressing this critical issue.

HB 2236 provided for a demonstration grant program. My preference is that we collectively look for sustainable funding rather than demonstration grants. HB 2752, as introduced, would give the Department on Aging the authority to contract with “any provider of care to older adults with mental disabilities.” My preference is to distribute funds to the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and require collaboration in the field. My expectation would be that AAAs work directly with their local Community Mental Health Centers. While AAAs are the experts on aging, CMHCs are the experts on mental health. I support the suggested amendments to this bill.

I applaud your effort to press forward on addressing this issue. Geriatric mental health services such as those proposed by this bill are not currently funded in the KDOA budget. However, I am willing to stay engaged in this conversation as we search for ways to provide funds to address the mental health needs of Kansas seniors.