



Kansas Health Foundation

February 8, 2017

Steve Coen, President and CEO
Kansas Health Foundation

Testimony for House Health and Human Services Committee regarding KanCare expansion

Chairman Hawkins and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on HB2064, establishing the KanCare bridge to a healthy Kansas program. We appreciate your willingness to receive testimony and to discuss this critical health issue for the people of Kansas in a very transparent way.

The Kansas Health Foundation continues to be a strong supporter of this effort because it works toward our mission of improving the health of all Kansans. Providing 150,000 working Kansans with affordable access to care would in itself provide significant benefit, not only for their health but for their economic security. Today, these individuals are often faced with difficult life choices because their income level puts them in a medical coverage gap. Many do not make enough to be able to afford private insurance premiums, and therefore either ignore health concerns and delay health care, or seek care and deal with significant medical bills as they attempt to pay out-of-pocket for treatment. In either case, the outcomes can be devastating and tragic.

Spend some time with any hospital admissions coordinator or primary care physician in the state and the stories they share will grab your heart. These uncovered Kansans are farmers, small business owners, young people and single-parents – they are hard-working individuals all trying to provide for their families. And yet, we have the opportunity to provide a way for them to thrive, both financially and with better health, by expanding this program.

But, we also can help our hospitals, healthcare providers, and communities that are struggling because of the costs they incur in uncompensated care. When an individual cannot pay for care, the financial dominos start to fall. Our community hospitals are faced with significant revenue challenges for non-covered patients. This affects their day-to-day operations, which often means difficult financial choices, including whether to downsize or layoff hospital staff. Many hospitals are one of, if not the largest employer in the community and as hospitals reduce staff or close, the economic stability of the community begins to crumble. It's hard to see how leaving gaps in health coverage for approximately 150,000 people has benefitted our state in any way.

At the Kansas Health Foundation, we see the strong connections between individual health, family health, business health and community health. We also see the link for the overall health of our state. We believe it's about both dollars and sense – using our dollars at the front end of health in a way that makes good common sense. We encourage you to think about all of our Kansas neighbors and create this bridge to a healthy Kansas.