



Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee

Senator Gene Suellentrop

Testimony in support of SB 252 (written only)

January 23, 2020

Chair Suellentrop and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of SB 252, which will expand KanCare for many hardworking Kansans. We appreciate your efforts to continue the bipartisan collaboration that has developed during this past year on this critical health issue, and we applaud you for bringing Medicaid expansion to a hearing so early in the legislative session.

The Kansas Health Foundation supports Medicaid expansion because that policy step will improve access to health care for tens of thousands of Kansans who currently fall in a coverage gap. Closing this coverage gap for Kansans would also bring hundreds of millions of federal tax dollars back home, create thousands of jobs and stimulate our local and state economies.

We have seen firsthand through our grantmaking investments and engagement with nonprofits that there is a dire need for affordable access to care. That access would be beneficial for working individuals and families – not only for their health, but for their economic security as well. Today, too many Kansans face difficult life choices because their income level puts them in a medical coverage gap. When Kansans can't afford private health insurance, they may either ignore health concerns or delay treatments – either of which may result in higher long-term costs as they are forced to pay out-of-pocket for care. In either case, the outcomes can be devastating and tragic.

This expansion also promises to help our hospitals, health care providers and communities struggling due to the economic pressures of 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 uninsured patients. This affects their day-to-day operations and can often impose difficult and untenable financial choices, including whether to downsize or layoff hospital staff. Hospitals are often the largest employers in a community, and as hospitals reduce staff or close, the economic stability of a community begins to crumble. These economic ramifications extend statewide year after year, as Kansans continue to pay billions of federal tax dollars yet receive an insufficient return to the state. Leaving gaps in health coverage for Kansans has not benefitted our state in any way. Furthermore, we know that communities are taxing themselves through property and sales tax mechanisms simply to maintain local access to health care.

At the Kansas Health Foundation, we see the strong connections between individual health, family health, business health and community health. KHF is also a funder and a member of the Alliance for a Healthy Kansas. We need your help to improve the health of all Kansans by making Medicaid expansion a reality in the 2020 legislative session. Thank you again for your work on this vitally important issue. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

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Background on the Kansas Health Foundation

The Kansas Health Foundation is based in Wichita, but statewide in its focus. With a mission to improve the health of all Kansans, KHF envisions a culture in which every Kansan can make healthy choices where they live, work and play. To achieve this, KHF focuses its work in four impact areas: access to affordable health care, healthy behaviors, civic and community engagement and educational attainment. During its 30-year history, KHF has provided more than \$500 million in grants to Kansas communities and organizations and looks forward to working toward its mission and vision for many years to come.