

**Testimony before House Committee on Health and Human Services**  
**House Bill 2178**  
**Secretary Pamela Johnson-Betts**  
**February 15, 2005**

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you in support of this bill amending the Senior Care Act (KSA 75-3927, et seq.). Currently, programs conducted under the act focus on community-based in-home services for senior Kansans with functional impairments. Participants pay for services on a sliding fee basis. With passage of this bill and within the limits of appropriations, the Department on Aging will be allowed to expand Senior Care Act activities to include preventive services designed to delay or avoid the onset of chronic conditions that create the need for costly long term care.

Poor health and long periods of dependency need not be the inevitable consequences of aging. Although chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and obesity are common and costly, many of them are preventable and manageable when appropriate measures are pursued. There are proven strategies to promote independence and prevent chronic diseases, disabilities, and injuries among seniors. Strategies to prevent and manage chronic conditions can improve the health of older adults, slow the rise in medical and social service costs, and ultimately benefit people of all ages.

The Department on Aging is currently developing a senior wellness and fitness program based on the Seattle / King County [Senior Wellness Project](#), an evidence-based health promotion and disease management program. The original project was created to provide accessible, low-cost health promotion programs to older adults with chronic conditions. The program is delivered through wellness sites, which typically offer:

- Walking program
- Daily hot lunch
- Nutrition and health education
- Interest groups and classes
- Volunteer opportunities
- Assistance with Transportation

In Kansas, as in King County, the senior wellness program will be supported by a coalition of community partners. KDOA will work with groups such as AARP, Kansas health foundations, faith based groups, recreation associations and the Area Agencies on Aging to provide broad community involvement in senior wellness programming. With its outcomes based focus and proven record of success, the new program has the potential to add great value for Kansas seniors. It will also help shape the attitudes of all Kansans to expect and plan for healthy lifestyles as they age.

The KDOA focus on prevention is consistent with and supports the Governor's [Healthy Kansas Initiative](#) launched last year. In cooperation with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment "Taking Steps Together" initiative, KDOA is pursuing other

activities supporting preventative health measures for Kansas seniors. They include People with Arthritis Can Exercise (PACE) Program, an exercise based program to help increase joint flexibility, range of motion and muscle strength, as well as the Senior Farmers Market Program.

The Senior Farmers Market program last year provided about 6,000 Kansas seniors with vouchers redeemable for fresh fruits and vegetables grown by Kansas farmers. Our follow-up surveys have shown the effectiveness of this program. Participants display greater knowledge of food preparation methods, understand safe food handling better, and consume greater varieties and quantities of fresh fruits and vegetables.

We know prevention programs work. Our society faces a number of problems related to health, such as rising health care costs, an epidemic of obesity, and an aging population. These problems will be solved, in part, by addressing chronic conditions through healthy lifestyles and other preventive strategies. HB 2178 will provide one tool for us to use in supporting this goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in support of this proposed legislation. I urge you to recommend HB 2178 favorable for passage.

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Additional Sources of Information:

[“Healthy Aging for Older Adults: Promoting Health, Preventing Disease and Enhancing Quality of Life Among Older Americans,”](#) Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[“State Programs in Action Exemplary Work to Prevent Chronic Disease and Promote Health, 2004,”](#) Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

[“Healthy Aging and States: Making Wellness the Rule, Not the Exception,”](#) National Governors Association.

[“National Blueprint: Increasing Physical Activity Among Adults Aged 50 and Older,”](#) Active Aging Partnership, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.