



# Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas

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February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
House Children and Seniors Committee

Chairwoman Concannon and Members of the Committee:

We are a proponent of HB2371 and thank you for having a hearing on this crucial legislation which disproportionately affects the women and young families of rural Kansas. Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas (CHC/SEK) is the largest Federally Qualified Health Center in the state and in 2020, brought medical, dental, behavioral health, addiction treatment, and case management services to over 60,000 patients across our service region. As the Vice President of Health Advancement, I am dedicated to improving the health of our communities through our population health team, case managers, and community health workers. Our teams, alongside their clinical counterparts, strive to eliminate all barriers to a healthy, productive life and a happy family environment.

HB2371 addresses unnecessary restrictions in situations where a family is actively breaking the cycle of generational poverty. This is no small feat, especially for rural families. Southeast Kansas and our service region, starting just 40 miles south of Johnson County, has some of the worst health outcomes and health factors in the entire state as ranked by the 2020 County Health Rankings from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. To illustrate this, compared to Johnson County: the teen pregnancy rate in Bourbon County is 4 times higher, the percentage of Montgomery County children in single-parent households is 80% higher, and 67% of Labette County children are eligible for free or reduced price lunch compared to just 24% of children in Johnson County. We are sicker, we are poorer, and we are more likely to die younger based only on our zip code. Our children deserve to grow up in a better Kansas.

Child care subsidies work. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), single mothers who receive subsidies work more hours, have more standard work schedules, stay in jobs longer, and earn more than mothers who do not receive subsidies. Subsidies can improve access to center-based child care centers. As presented in the American Economic Journal, research indicates that subsidies that promote formal child care settings can have positive long-term effects on children's future educational attainment and labor market participation. We need to remove barriers to the systems we already have that are proven to work well.



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In 2022, CHC/SEK will begin our very own rural family practice residency program in Pittsburg. This is incredibly important for our region, which is mainly composed of Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), because research shows that over half of physicians practice within 100 miles of their residency program.

Wouldn't it be impressive, if a child care subsidy gave a pathway to a child from Southeast Kansas to grow up to be a physician in Southeast Kansas? This is the future that CHC/SEK is creating for our region.

We support HB2371 because what's good for our rural counties is good for Kansas. We need to eliminate these unnecessary barriers to a better life for our rural kids and families.

Please let me know if I, or the Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas, can be a resource on this topic in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Karlea Abel'.

Karlea Abel, MPH  
Vice President of Health Advancement  
Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas  
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