



Kansas Sheriffs' Association

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Testimony to the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
In Support of SB195
January 23, 2018

Chair Schmidt and Committee Members,

The Kansas Sheriff's Association supports the concept of SB195, but are opposed to the provisions in subsection (e) since it would be difficult, at best, for the jail to know if a person is on Medicaid and it will be difficult for the jails to relay that information to KDHE in a timely manner due to the booking and release frequently taking place outside normal business hours. However, we are in favor of the amendments we understand will be proposed to address concerns in several parts of the bill, including our concerns with subsection (e). As such, if that proposed amendment to the bill modifying subsection (c) and deleting subsections (d) and (e) are adopted we will support the bill.

County jails across the State of Kansas experience significant turnover, including high recidivism rates. Jail inmates suffer from chronic health conditions at a higher rate than the general population and suffer higher rates of mental illness. Many of those with a mental illness also suffer from substance abuse issues, as does a high percentage of the general jail population.

Approximately two-thirds of those detained in jails are there pretrial, many of whom are being held simply because they cannot afford their bail or have just been arrested and will be released in a few days. Terminating coverage for such short stays in jail affects a huge number of individuals and greatly slows the speed at which they can be reconnected to coverage upon release as well as can prevent them from obtaining needed treatment.

Suspension of Medicaid coverage allows for quicker reinstatement of benefits when a person leaves jail and fewer challenges in obtaining mental health, addiction or other health services during the critical first months of post-incarceration. These issues have a major impact on how much counties must spend on justice, public safety and correctional services. Maintaining a continuum of care between mental health, addiction and medical services delivered in jail and those available in the community upon release could prevent reoffending and a return to county jails

The Kansas Sheriff's Association is a proponent of SB195 once the amendments have been made. We thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

Sheriff Jeffrey T. Easter
Legislative Chair for the Kansas Sheriff's Association