

TESTIMONY
House Bill 2149

By Barbara Hickert
Kansas State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
February 13, 2019

Chairwoman Concannon and Members of the House Children and Seniors Committee,

I am Barbara Hickert, the Kansas State Long-Term Care Ombudsman. I appreciate the opportunity to come before you today to bring neutral testimony regarding HB 2149, providing for a penalty provision related to timeliness and performance standards for determining Medicaid eligibility.

Our agency advocates for the rights of individuals residing in adult care homes throughout Kansas, including nursing facilities and long-term care units of hospitals, but also assisted living facilities, home plus facilities, residential health care facilities, boarding care facilities, and adult day care centers. Our network of Regional Ombudsmen and Certified Ombudsman Volunteers investigate and resolve complaints made by or on behalf of residents with the goal of enhancing their quality of life and quality of care.

We fully agree with providers that the current system for Medicaid eligibility is unacceptable. The impact of this failed system on nursing homes and other providers over the last three years is unacceptable. We agree with providers that the financial costs to them for uncompensated care is unacceptable.

The answer to this problem is moving Medicaid applications back to the State of Kansas, back to the well-functioning system we had before 2016. Back to a system where older adult and/or their families can talk to and receive the help they needed to navigate this complex application.

Nursing homes are not the only casualty in this broken system.

The broken edibility determination system has also come at a high cost to Kansas elders. Those effects will continue or years, if and when the system is fixed. Kansans who are Medicaid pending, and need care are being denied access to that care. Having to wait for services when they are needed can cause harm to already frail elders. If they do find a care home willing to admit them, they are not in the facility, the city or even the county where the person would want to receive those services and can be near their family. Residents who are already in a facility are frequently being involuntarily discharge or threatened with discharge, not because they've done anything wrong, but because of the problems with the clearinghouse.