



Topeka Independent Living Resource Center

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Senate Committee on Public Health & Welfare
Senator Gene Sullentrop, Chair

Testimony in Support of Medicaid Expansion

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Topeka Independent Living Resource Center

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The Topeka Independent Living Resource Center (TILRC) is a civil and human rights organization. Our mission is to advocate for justice, equality and essential services for a fully integrated and accessible society for all people with disabilities. TILRC has been providing cross-age, cross-disability advocacy and services for almost 40 years to people with disabilities in Shawnee County and across the state of Kansas. Our agency has been particularly interested in and committed to assuring that people who require long term services and supports have access to information, services and supports that offer choices; choices that promote freedom, independent lifestyles and dignity, including the dignity of risk.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information about how people with disabilities would be impacted by expansion of Medicaid in Kansas.

Health insurance coverage for all Kansans IS a disability rights issue.

A substantial number of the people who would benefit from Medicaid expansion are people with disabilities. Currently, Kansans with disabilities can only obtain Medicaid by establishing both that there is a disability, and that the person is incapable of “substantial gainful activity,” essentially that the person is unemployable. Medicaid expansion would allow people who have a disability to secure health insurance coverage and care without having to remove themselves from the workforce.

Advocacy and services provided by and for people with disabilities.

Medicaid expansion has been shown to boost employment, most specifically for people with disabilities. People who have been determined to be disabled by social security may be capable of working and interested in doing so, but not at the peril of losing health insurance coverage. A University of Kansas study showed a direct correlation between increased employment for people with disabilities and Medicaid expansion. (“Medicaid Expansion Boosts Employment”, July 19, 2018. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/07/180719165043.htm>).

People with disabilities who use Home and Community Based Services rely on the labor of Direct Support Workers, most of whom are paid less than \$10.00/hour, and none of whom have access to employer-provided benefits such as health insurance. As a matter of the freedom and choice for people with disabilities to live in their own homes and communities, extending a benefit that would serve Direct Support Workers is critical to maintaining the workforce we rely on.

Medicaid expansion will benefit disabled people in Kansas; political efforts to make Medicaid expansion come at the cost of other services and supports for people with disabilities perpetuates segregation and discrimination against people with disabilities by forcing us to leave or remain out of the workforce, and by failing to support the direct support workforce we rely on to maintain our places in the community. We support the effort to expand Medicaid with no barriers, no limitations, no premiums, and no delays.