



Testimony on the Proposed Medicaid Expansion Bill
By Public Policy Coordinator, The Whole Person
To
Kansas Legislature Special Committee on Medicaid Expansion
November 6, 2019

Thank you Chairwoman Brenda Landwehr, Vice Chairman Gene Suellentrop, and members of this committee for allowing me to make the case for the Expansion of KanCare in the state of Kansas that provides vital access to healthcare for people with disabilities.

The Whole Person is a strong supporter of the expansion of KanCare. As a Center for Independent Living, we strive to better serve people with disabilities throughout Johnson, Leavenworth and Wyandotte counties. For 40 years, The Whole Person has offered a broad range of services to people with disabilities to increase their ability to perform day-to-day activities and reduce the need of support from family members, professional attendants or other care-giving services. Our services and programs build the confidence of these individuals and improve the many skills they need to live, learn and work in the community.

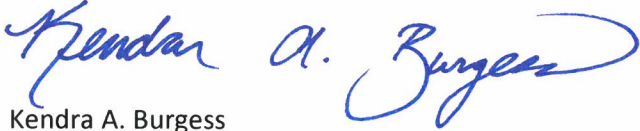
Nearly 1 in 5 people were reported to have a disability in the United States by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2012. Perhaps you are one of them. Of those individuals, *“adults age 21 to 64 with disabilities had median monthly earnings of \$1,961 compared with \$2,724 for those with no disability.”* In 2015, the Kaiser Family Foundation also reported that *“although Medicaid beneficiaries with disabilities make up only 15% of all enrollees, they account for more than 40% of total Medicaid spending.”* We see a similar dynamic here at the local level as well. Most of the consumers we serve utilize Medicaid to receive home and community-based services and at least 95.2% of them are estimated to be 200% below the federal poverty level. As the data suggests, there is a great need for Medicaid services and that number is only projected to grow as our population continues to age.

In addition, the economic impact of failing to pass expansion of KanCare has resulted in the loss of millions of dollars for the State of Kansas, while other states continue to benefit. This problem is further exacerbated by the closure of rural hospitals around the nation, including four recent closures in Kansas. So, people with disabilities who are home bound in those areas must now travel with great difficulty to receive emergency care, have prolonged periods without home visits from medical providers and other healthcare services and risk deleterious long-term health outcomes.

In conclusion, The Whole Person supports Medicaid Expansion in the State of Kansas because it will provide the economic growth to stabilize hospitals, especially in rural communities, provide revenue for the state to offset the cost of expansion, enhance preventative care, and increase coverage for people with disabilities.

People with disabilities represent the largest minority group in the county and anyone can join at any time. So, we all have a vested interest in making sure that people with disabilities have equal access to affordable healthcare. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,



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