

**Testimony on behalf of the effort to expand Medicaid before the Senate Public Health and Welfare committee hearing. This written testimony has been prepared by Rev. Peter A Luckey, January 17, 2020. I can be reached at 785-979-1149**

My name is Rev. Peter Luckey. I am an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ. I am recently retired from serving as Senior Pastor of the Plymouth Congregational Church in Lawrence.

I want to lend my voice today on behalf of the thousands of Kansans that do not have access to health insurance. I urge our legislators to do the right thing: Expand Medicaid now.

Through the course of my ministry and now as a volunteer at our local food pantry and shelter for the homeless, I repeatedly speak with the most vulnerable people in our community. I see people limp through the door of our local pantry with their canes, walkers, and oxygen tanks. I hear their stories. So many I have talked to cannot afford the medication they need.

Behind every statistic is a human being, a fellow Kansan, who seeks what we all seek: freedom from suffering and pain.

Meet Julio. Julio is homeless. He is staying now at our local shelter. Julio is in the fight of his life. He battles hepatitis, and leukemia. Julio has no health insurance. I asked him how it felt when he was denied coverage. He said, "I felt like I was a non-person. It shatters your self-esteem."

Julio has been a tree cutter. He wants to work but he cannot because of his health. He is on doctor's orders not to work. If Julio had access to regular visits to the doctor, if he had good health care, he could well be back at work.

We all need health care. Every one of us is only temporarily able bodied. Every one of us will need medical assistance at some point in our lives.

I fractured my neck two years ago in a freak accident. Where would I be without physicians and nurses and EMT's to attend to my injuries?

All the great religions of the world teach a message of compassion. "To clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, heal the sick" Every human being is worthy in the eyes of God, deserving of dignity and respect.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century our ancestors fought to make Kansas a free state. They did this because they believed slavery was abomination in the eyes of God, that slavery violated the dignity of all persons.

Now in the year 2020 Kansas is being asked again to step up on behalf of the dignity of all persons, especially our most vulnerable in our communities.

Let's be proud of our State. Let's be a leader in our nation where it comes to compassion towards the most vulnerable in our society. For Julio's sake and thousands like him, I urge that we expand KanCare now. Simply put this is the moral thing to do.

Let's pass legislation to expand KanCare now!