

To the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee,

I am a Program Director for the Community Health Council of Wyandotte County where I oversee operations of the Kansas Assisters Network. The Kansas Assisters Network assists families with social services applications including Medicaid and Marketplace health insurance. Over the years, I have seen countless residents denied coverage since Kansas legislators decided not to expand Medicaid eligibility to those with incomes below 138% of the federal poverty level. These clients are left without access to basic healthcare services and many of their stories are heartbreaking.

In one situation, a mother was diagnosed with a very severe chronic condition and was unable to work because she cared for her two disabled adult sons. Although she received money from the state to care for the men, it wasn't enough for her to qualify for financial assistance in the Marketplace. The woman feared she may die without proper treatment and her sons would be institutionalized.

I receive calls several times a year from uninsured residents looking for cancer treatment resources. Unfortunately, in Kansas, there are very few for people without insurance. It's agonizing to tell someone facing such a serious disease that they're too poor for healthcare.

Likewise, I regularly see residents who fail to treat mild conditions because they lack access to specialty care and end-up losing their jobs when the illnesses worsen. Most of these clients accumulate thousands of dollars in medical debt following preventable trips to the emergency room. Hospitals are forced to absorb these bills and pass higher prices on to consumers. Also, without access to mental health services, some of my uninsured clients find themselves unnecessarily in jails or institutions.

Medicaid expansion would make it easier for my families to get healthy and stay healthy. It would keep more of them out of emergency rooms and help them sustain employment. My organization is dedicated to improving health care access to residents and I feel Senate Bill 252 would make significant improvements to health outcomes and the lives of Wyandotte County residents. Please consider this testimony when voting on Kansas Medicaid Expansion. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Molly Gotobed

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