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Partners in America's Poverty Fighting Network

**Testimony Submitted to the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
Scott Anglemeyer, Exec. Dir., Kansas Association of Community Action Programs
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Chairman Suellentrop and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to submit this testimony to you on behalf of the board and staff of the Kansas Association of Community Action Programs (KACAP). KACAP is the statewide organization representing the eight community action agencies (CAAs) in Kansas. Our members are organizations whose mission is to provide a range of services and activities addressing the causes and conditions of poverty, with the active participation and leadership of the low-income people they serve. Together, these eight agencies provide services to over 21,000 Kansans in poverty each year.

KACAP fully supports KanCare expansion. We believe that expanding KanCare is the single most important action that the Legislature could take to reduce poverty in the state. A study from Columbia University reported in the February 2019 issue of Health Affairs concluded that states that have expanded Medicaid have poverty rates that are nearly a full percentage point lower than they would have had if they had not expanded Medicaid. In Kansas, that would equate to more than 26,000 Kansans—almost one-fifth of the 150,000 Kansans who fall in the coverage gap—who could escape poverty with expanded Medicaid.

There are likely several reasons that expansion reduces poverty. Studies show that low-income residents of non-expansions states have significantly higher levels of medical debt than their counterparts in states that have expanded Medicaid. Because it increases demand for healthcare and produces additional revenue for healthcare providers, expansion creates jobs, at least some of which would be filled by poor Kansans. And expansion improves health outcomes, preventing minor conditions from becoming chronic ones, increasing people's availability for work. More than half of expanded Medicaid recipients surveyed in Ohio reported that receiving Medicaid made it easier to obtain and maintain employment.

KACAP Member Agencies and Board of Directors

Community Action, Inc.

East Central Kansas Economic Opportunity Corp.

Economic Opportunity Foundation

Harvest America Corp.

Mid-Kansas Community Action Program

Northeast Kansas Community Action Program

Southeast Kansas Community Action Program

Wichita Sedgwick County Community Action Partnership

We recognize that some people worry that expansion rewards idleness, experience shows the opposite is true. This misplaced concern about employment might lead some to add work requirements. We encourage you to resist this temptation. Where work requirements have been attempted in other states, analyses have show that they have had little or no effect on employment levels, but have resulted in the denial of coverage to thousands of people, many of whom were likely working but were unable to meet the cumbersome requirements to document their employment status.

Because of the demonstrated effect of expansion on poverty levels, we strongly support Senate Bill 252. Passing this bill would improve the lives of thousands of Kansans living in poverty, helping many of them to escape poverty and get on track to prosperity.