

## **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup> OF KANSAS**

I am Dolores Furtado, speaking on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Kansas. We are advocating expansion of the federally-funded Medicaid program, now called KanCare, a program designed to serve the indigent. We believe that access to health care is a basic need that should be available to all Kansans. The League of Women Voters of Kansas also supports access to mental health services through Community Mental Health Centers available throughout the state. Making such services accessible is, in the end, less costly than going to an Emergency Room or being incarcerated in County jails. Mental health care intervention reduces poverty, promotes faster recovery and strengthens families. Integrated mental and physical health care should be provided under the Medicaid program.

Preventative strategies that focus on wellness benefit the individual and all of society. Communicable infectious agents cause disease which may spread to others who come in contact with an ill person. Another consideration in Public Health are carriers, those persons who are asymptomatic or who are manifesting less obvious signs. They carry the agents thereby spreading the infection to susceptible individuals. Just recently, a student in Johnson County was diagnosed with tuberculosis. The epidemiologists are screening hundreds of contacts to determine the spread, if any, to susceptible contacts. The importance of vaccination of infants and toddlers can't be emphasized enough. Vaccinations protect the each child and the well being of the adults who care for the children. Adult vaccinations are important in maintaining wellness and preventing respiratory infections and pneumonia that can be fatal.

While the cost of Medicaid expansion to the state does increase from zero to 10 percent by 2020, the Federal government's contribution at 90 percent is far greater than the 50 percent match in the existing KanCare program. The return on investment is great. What is the dollar value of improving the health of Kansans where wellness, prevention and better health lead to greater productivity? Healthy children are better students. Parents of healthy children experience fewer interruptions, keep a job, advance at work and possibly earn their way out of poverty.

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Kansas, I urge this Committee to pass Legislation that will permit Medicaid Expansion to occur in Kansas.

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