

House Health and Human Services Committee

Testimony in support of HB 2319

March 18, 2015

My name is Tandem Harrison and I am the owner of Bank Barber Stylist on Kansas Ave. I am a single mother of three beautiful children, two of which have disabilities. My son Josiah has Autism (he is on the low-functioning end of the spectrum), ADHD and intellectually disabled. He is 10 years old but functions from an 18 month old level in his communication to a 3-4yr old in other areas. Not a day goes by where I don't get a phone call or an email from his school due to his behavior, a lot of time I have to leave my business and go to his school (out in Auburn, KS) to help him get himself together. My baby boy will very possibly have to be taken care of by me for my entire life. My 12 yr. old daughter, Alianna, is well above average intelligence but she needs therapy to help her cope with not only being a middle child but also being in a family where she has two siblings that really struggle to achieve the simple things in everyday life. My eldest daughter, Maileiah, 14, is high functioning on the Autism spectrum, has major depressive disorder, anxiety and also has ADHD, some things come to her naturally but academically and socially she really struggles; due to her anxiety at least once or twice a month I get a phone call to help her out at school because she's having a rough day. Thankfully they are covered by their fathers insurance through his employment. That is a double edged sword for me.

Medicaid feels because my kids are covered by private insurance by their father I don't qualify for Medicaid because I work and am not disabled or pregnant. I can't afford insurance but because the Market place feels I qualify for Medicaid I don't qualify for a tax credit. I have pre-existing conditions so other short-term insurance won't cover me. I don't have insurance, therefore, I am denied medical services unless I pay cash, which is difficult on my finances. I am a single mother with three children that gets paid \$448 a month for child support, two out of three of my children have disabilities which also puts a strain on my business, finances and my health.

I own a barbershop, insurance is hard to afford for a business owner. I don't have an employer that can provide me with insurance. I can't afford to be ill because I work on my feet all day and with different clients. I have untreated chronic illnesses it is difficult to work all day on my feet...if I had insurance I would be able to get the treatments and therapies I need in order to be able to continue to work and do what I love.

I have been diagnosed with sickle cell disease, PCOS, endometriosis, adenomyosis and fibroid tumors. Up until March of this year I had not been to a gynecologist or had a yearly exam or a dentist since 2006. I have not been to a general practitioner since 2000. I was found to have sickle cell in the ER in 2010. All of these things quite possibly could have been treated if I had

had insurance but the problems have progressively gotten worse over the years without treatment. I feel had I had insurance maybe the doctors that I encountered would have run more tests to figure out what exactly is wrong other than estimating diagnosis.

I suffer from PTSD and depression and cannot afford to see a therapist. I'm a fulltime caregiver to my son and daughter who have Autism, ADHD and an Intellectual Disability. I worry everyday due to my physical health and mental health that I may not be able to fully give proper care to them for the long haul, my son will possibly have to live with me for the rest of his life and if I can't get the care that I need I can't be there to keep his quality of life comfortably.

I have gotten the run around as far as who handles what paperwork from the Marketplace, the KanCare clearinghouse and DCF (when they decide to return phone calls). The Marketplace Eligibility Notice, page 2, under heading "What Should I Do Next?" It clearly states, "If the above table tells you that you or any of your family members are or may be eligible for KanCare program, the agency will contact you with more information about your health benefits, services and how much you pay for them. If you don't hear from them call them at the phone number listed in the section, "Where can I find more information?"" I did this and on several occasions and was told yes we have your information but we are so backed up we have not processed them yet. This was from KanCare and Marketplace...I was pushed off until past the enrollment period. Now even if I get denied by KanCare I now have to wait until the next enrollment period to get insurance due to them being backed up. My application has been "lost" in the system or paperwork has not been received on numerous applications due to them being "backed up". KanCare on more than one occasion has dropped the ball by being backlogged, losing paperwork and/or requesting unneeded documents. There have been several instances that I was told that I haven't even contacted them. I have been told that I have to be denied due to other reasons than not receiving paperwork in order to possibly get the tax credit. I have been told that chances are I will not qualify because I am not disabled or pregnant and because I work. I fall into that gray area of, 'You can be covered here so we can't cover you.' back and forth, back and forth. In the meantime, I get sicker and sicker because I can't afford treatment. The sicker I get the less I can perform my job to my full capacity, I have to schedule around my illness or suffer through it.

I have worked for almost my whole life, most times two and three jobs at a time. I've gotten to where I'm struggling with just the one job, due to my illnesses. I want to be back to the point where I can function to full capacity, so that I can keep my business, put my children through college and leave something for them. I see this slowly slipping away as I am struggling with my illnesses.

Thank you for reading my story, I hope that this can help others and myself to get health coverage. There is nothing worse than knowing that you can be treated but you don't have the insurance or the money to get better. It is a destitute feeling. There are thousands of Kansans just like me that can benefit from this expansion. Please make the decision to help us; we desperately need your help.

Tandem Harrison

Topeka, KS

tandem.thurman@gmail.com