

House Health and Human Services Committee

Testimony in support of HB 2319

March 18, 2015

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide my testimony to you today. My name is Julia Seymour. I am 56 years old and I am uninsured. In 2001, I had a detached retina and became blind in one eye. My other eye is becoming blurry also and will be seeing an optometrist soon. I do wonder if this issue is more than just having to use glasses. I worry I am becoming blind in my other eye as well.

I have back pain therefore I can only work about 30 hours a week. There are weeks that I don't always get my 30 hours because work is slow. I make about \$10,000-\$11,000 a year for my income. I did not qualify for tax credits through the marketplace and paying for health insurance on my own would cost me about \$300 a month. I don't have \$300 a month to pay for that. I have to pay for rent, utilities and other household expenses. I shouldn't have to choose whether or not to pay for my health insurance or pay for my rent. When I need medical care, I go to the Health Partnership Clinic of Johnson County for my basic needs. They work with me and let me pay \$20 for my visits, but there are times I don't have any money and I cannot pay but I need to be seen. They have worked with me and waived my \$20 fee for that time. I have an X-Ray appointment coming up for my back aches and that will determine if I will need back surgery. If the X-Ray doesn't show anything I will then get an MRI. With my health issues, how can I continue to pay out of pocket? A few months ago I had severe bronchitis. I had to go to the emergency room to get help. Now I have an emergency bill that I have to pay on top of everything else. I am barely scraping by to make ends meet.

I am currently on blood pressure meds that I pay out of pocket but can't really take the one the physician originally prescribed because it was too expensive so we had to go with a less effective and expensive one. I can't recall the original prescribed but at almost \$40 dollars a month, I had to get Atenolol. Health Partnership Clinic recently called to tell me the doctor needs to talk to me about labs. If there is any further problem with my health I can't afford any more medication.

Because of my concern with my blurry eye, I have set up an optometrist appointment. I have been putting this on hold because I had no way of paying for my appointment and have been wearing the same glasses for seven years. I had to wait until I got my tax refund to be able to make this appointment and pay for it.

Expanding Medicaid in Kansas would help so many people who are struggling like I am. I work and pay my bills but I shouldn't have to go without health insurance because I have bills to pay. Expanding Medicaid for working Kansans would benefit us by eliminating emergency room visits and not falling into medical debt. We would be able to get our medications we need without having to worry what it will cost us.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my story.

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