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Dear Kansas Legislators:

I am writing, first of all, to thank the State of Kansas. At one time I had a medical condition and I needed to receive help from Medicaid. Without this assistance, it is quite possible that I would not have survived. Thanks to Medicaid, I recovered, and I am very grateful for that.

I currently work in a health-related profession. I am extremely concerned about the status of many of the people I work for, because most of them are not going to be able to pay for their health insurance much longer. This is a huge crisis in the making. It is not pleasant to consider the effect of having a large uninsured population upon Kansas hospitals and communities.

I volunteered at a safety-net clinic this past year. I often saw people come in who had serious conditions that could have been treated much more easily if they had just had medical care made available to them a little earlier.

I have seen estimates that 330 Kansans will die this year because of not having access to medical care. I wonder how legislators who vote against Medicaid expansion can sleep at night. These people, who may seem of little account, are valuable human beings. Some of them, like me, are able to recover and contribute economically. However, all of our citizens are worthy of having a decent standard of medical care.

Hospitals are mandated by federal law to stabilize patients in their emergency departments. But if no Medicaid expansion exists, patients can't get treatment for their illnesses, and their conditions will usually get worse, resulting in additional emergency visits, without ever actually dealing with the problem. By not having Medicaid expansion, whole communities will be affected as hospitals will have repeated emergency visits from people who can't pay, and some will go under as they attempt to cope with the costs of this no-win situation.

Here is another reason to consider Medicaid expansion: not having Medicaid expansion creates a brain drain.

I am a recent graduate of a program in a health care field. I received my education through an excellent Kansas school. However, it is likely that I will find better job offers in states that have Medicaid expansion, because the medical facilities in these states have better funding and will be hiring more workers. Do we really want Kansas to be left behind as the rest of the nation moves forward in providing medical care? How can this possibly help our state?

I understand that there are legitimate concerns about the future costs of Medicaid expansion. We wonder how it will be funded down the road. But I also wonder, how can we have a good economy unless Kansans are healthy? A healthy work force is essential.

Aside from the cost of human suffering, the cost of not providing health care will not pay off in the long run. It is like refusing to maintain a car because it is cheaper not to change the oil. This is shortsighted thinking.

Is it a good idea to stubbornly resist Medicaid expansion? No, it is not. Thank you for considering my viewpoint, and again, thank you, State of Kansas, for your help in saving my life.

Sincerely,

Edith K. Williams