



Health Department

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House Bill 2319 – Support

House Health and Human Services Committee

Brenda J. Nickel, MS, RN, Director and Local Health Officer

March 18, 2015

Chairman Hawkins and members of the committee – On behalf of the Riley County Board of Health and Riley County Health Department (RCHD), I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 2319 for expansion of eligibility for the State medical assistance program.

Riley County is currently conducting Community Health Improvement Plan meetings in our six communities with Mercy Regional/Via Christi Health Center. While there are many health priorities being identified, three key issues is poverty, lack of affordable health care, and access to care. KanCare 2.0 would provide access to healthcare coverage options for newly eligible individuals assisting the RCHD and private and public community partners to address behavioral, dental, and health needs. Poverty levels for Riley County residents indicate 23.2 percent are living below 100 percent Federal Poverty Level (kansashealthmatters.org). Our adult residents face challenges accessing health care services as 14.2 percent of the adult population is without health insurance. In addition to barriers related to lack of insurance, Riley County has a designation as a low-income: Primary Care Health Professional Shortage health and services to the low-income, uninsured/underinsured population of Riley County.

It is the role of the 38 professionals at the Riley County Health Department (RCHD) to monitor health status in Riley County, mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems; link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable. The Riley County Board of Health and RCHD has committed to assisting constituents who need access to health care, preventative services, and dental or primary care and do not have access to health insurance to pay for the care. The RCHD has collaborated to co-locate a KanCare eligibility specialist, a ACA Navigator from the Konza Prairie Community Health Center, and committing a RCHD social worker Certified Application Counselor to assist families in identifying eligibility for insurance coverage and link to care with private or public primary care, behavioral health, or dental providers. Yet, when these individuals are sent to one of the above-mentioned professionals to determine eligibility for

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health insurance and receive assistance in linking to care, all too often it is identified that individuals and families earn too much to qualify for KanCare, but do not earn enough to qualify for subsidies through the Affordable Care Act.

The RCHD provides preventative health services to children and adult women and men, as well as other services that are reimbursable through third party payers. In 2014 the RCHD saw 6136 adult individuals for services of which 1726 or 28 percent were uninsured. These individuals and families do their best to meet their financial obligations for services, yet may struggle to pay for care. Since 2012 Riley County generated client/patient self-pay debt of \$170,721.60 that impacts the \$3.8 million budget of the RCHD. With expansion of Medicaid for adults, Riley County would generate revenue to support important outreach health promotion and prevention activities, assist in referring adults to needed health services, and improve health and quality of life for those members of our communities who are currently unable to access or pay for basic preventative health services and care.

The RCHD is collaboratively working with various partners to improve health, reduce health care costs, and assist our 75,000 residents in identifying and contributing to strategies to improve health and quality of life. The RCHD is committed to assisting individuals and families' currently not able access services due to inability to pay. It is our Mission to assure that everyone in a community has optimal health regardless where they live, work, learn, play, and pray. Your consideration of expansion of eligibility for the State medical assistance program through House Bill 2319 requiring the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to develop a federal Medicaid waiver for a budget-neutral managed care program known as KanCare 2.0 will assist the Riley County Board of Health and the RCHD in addressing our opportunities to improve health by focusing our resources on health prevention and promotion efforts.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this written testimony to the members of the House Health and Human Services Committee and appreciate your consideration of my comments in support of HB 2319.

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