



Kansas Advocates  
for  
Better Care

# *Making Elder Care Better Since 1975*

*Founded in 1975 as **Kansans for Improvement of Nursing Homes** by concerned citizens like you.*

March 18, 2015

Chairman Hawkins, and members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you for the opportunity to express support for HB 2319 and expanding Medicaid in Kansas. Kansas Advocates for Better Care (KABC) is a not-for-profit organization, beholden to no commercial interests and is supported almost entirely by donations from citizens who support our mission of improving the quality of care in all long-term settings. KABC was among a handful of non-profit consumer advocacy groups which worked to win passage of the Nursing Home Reform Act of 1987.

KABC strongly supports expanding Medicaid eligibility to 138% of poverty. Medicaid expansion to this level can eliminate gaps in health coverage of adults who will eventually enroll in Medicare. Adults with health insurance prior to enrolling in Medicare have better health outcomes and lower costs per enrollee.

A recent report from the Government Accounting Office (GAO), "Medicare: Continuous Insurance before Enrollment Associated with Better Health and Lower Program Spending," showed:

- Seniors who had health insurance for six years prior to Medicare are more likely to report better health after Medicare enrollment.
- These same seniors cost Medicare less money (35% lower, on average) in the first years of enrollment because they used fewer or less costly health services.
- The savings to Medicare was an average of \$2,343 per insured enrollee.

The 2012 Census counts 21,873 uninsured Kansans, ages 50-64, living below the 138% of the federal poverty level. These uninsured Kansans represent 31%, nearly one-third, of the 70,205 persons in this age group. This is almost double the national average of 18%.

They lack health insurance because they are not working, or are working in low paying jobs without employer-based health insurance. They struggle to meet daily expenses and may have little to no retirement. Many are raising their grandchildren. Without health insurance before age 65, they may avoid or defer seeking necessary medical care. As a result, they enter Medicare with untreated health problems.

Rising tides raise all boats. Expanding Medicaid helps ensure that Kansas seniors enter Medicare in better health which ultimately saves Medicare costs when they reach age 65. Adults with regular and preventive health care are able to live at home, delaying or avoiding altogether nursing home care.

Please support Kansas seniors without health insurance by passing HB 2319 to allow the expansion of Medicaid in Kansas.

On behalf of KABC members and volunteers,  
Mitzi E. McFatrach, Executive Director