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Kansas Health Foundation

Testimony for House Health and Human Services Committee on HB2319

Chairman Daniel Hawkins and Members of the Committee:

Background on Kansas Health Foundation

The mission of the Kansas Health Foundation is to improve the health of all Kansans. To achieve this, we promote health and wellness in our schools, neighborhoods and workplaces. Grow leaders in our communities. Inspire decision makers. Act as a voice for healthy public policy. And start and foster community philanthropy that will see our mission thrive for generations. Together with our grantees and partners, we want Kansas to be the healthiest, most productive, most livable state in the nation. Since 1985, we have provided more than \$500 million in charitable distributions to Kansas communities and maintain an asset base today of approximately \$500 million, which makes us the largest health foundation based in Kansas.

Medicaid Expansion Is A Sound Investment

As a charitable organization committed to improving the health of people and communities in Kansas, we see Medicaid expansion as an opportunity to reduce the health care gap that disadvantages many people in our state. Our foundation invests millions of dollars each year in health programs and services for uninsured and medically underserved people in Kansas. Still, our resources cannot make up for the challenges that come with being uninsured.

Through our philanthropic endeavors, we know robust and healthy communities and economic vitality are enhanced by the health of the people who live there. Being uninsured isn't just an isolated household condition – the effects spill into the communities where people live and work. Health and human service safety nets, public health systems and hospitals feel the strain. There's an impact on family financial stability. And there are costs that local governments and the state carry in order to compensate health care organizations that provide care to the uninsured.

We believe Medicaid expansion is a sound investment for Kansas. It creates a pathway for thousands of uninsured Kansans to obtain health coverage, and thereby take greater ownership over their own health.

Fairness for the Working Class

Nearly one in five¹ Kansas adults under 65 don't have health insurance, including more than 107,000 full-time working Kansans² in more than 150 industries,³ many of which are critical to the Kansas economy.

With Medicaid expansion, restaurant, fast food and retail workers, construction workers, and those who work with our children and assist our aging loved ones would gain new access to insurance. Most working-age Kansans who lack insurance have jobs, yet they remain uninsured because their employers offer health coverage that is unaffordable or they are not offered coverage and don't qualify for Medicaid. This option would dramatically improve the health, financial security and productivity of the state's workforce.

Expanding Medicaid is a common-sense approach that would go a long way toward increasing economic security for uninsured workers, as well as being an asset for small businesses – which would benefit from a healthier and more productive workforce.

Medicaid expansion reaches every corner of Kansas

If Kansas does not expand Medicaid, it will miss an opportunity to increase health coverage across the state. Every county in Kansas stands to benefit from expansion. Medicaid expansion can provide economic stability for rural health care providers and ease the challenges of delivering care in sparsely populated areas. It can offer individuals in rural areas excellent access to care, especially because many rural Kansans have limited access to private insurance. The positive impacts of Medicaid expansion, in the form of broader health coverage and increased payments to providers, will benefit *all* parts of our state, especially rural areas.

For these reasons and more, we believe Medicaid expansion is the right approach for Kansas. We respectfully request that committee members support House Bill 2319.

^{1, 2} U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2013

³ Census American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), 2013