



Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc.

534 S. Kansas, Suite 330, Topeka, KS 66603
Telephone (785) 234-4773 Fax (785) 234-3189
Website: www.acmhck.org

Michael J. Hammond
Executive Director

Testimony to House Committee on Appropriations on House Concurrent Resolution 5013

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Mister Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Mike Hammond and I serve as the Executive Director of the Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc. The Association appreciates the opportunity to present testimony on HCR 5013, which would indicate the Legislature's intention not to expand Medicaid services in Kansas.

The Association represents the 27 licensed Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) in Kansas who provide home and community-based, as well as outpatient mental health services in all 105 counties in Kansas, 24-hours a day, seven days a week. In Kansas, CMHCs are the local Mental Health Authorities coordinating the delivery of publicly funded community-based mental health services. As part of licensing regulations, CMHCs are required to provide services to all Kansans needing them, regardless of their ability to pay. This makes the community mental health system the "safety net" for Kansans with mental health needs, collectively serving over 127,000 Kansans with mental illness.

Expansion of KanCare is good for Kansans with mental illness. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) includes the option for a significant expansion of KanCare that would positively impact Kansans with mental illness. Under the law, all persons who meet the new national income limit of 133% of the federal poverty level would be eligible for KanCare.

In Kansas, more than half of those who present for treatment at CMHCs have no insurance. Without treatment, these individuals will decompensate, and may end up in jails, emergency rooms or state hospitals—all of which are much more expensive than community based services. Expansion of KanCare will provide coverage for those who have a mental illness so they can access needed mental health treatment in their communities. We have a unique opportunity to help thousands of Kansans with mental illness get access to early, effective treatments - at no cost to the state for the first three years. Expanding KanCare will help these vulnerable individuals get access to the treatment they need, before it's too late.

There are significant economic benefits if Kansas were to expand KanCare. According to a recent study commissioned by the Kansas Hospital Association, the expansion of KanCare would enable the State to draw down billions of dollars in additional federal funding that would increase employment not only in the health care sector, but also across other sectors of the Kansas economy. Kansas would be doing a disservice to those Kansans who have a serious mental illness by not expanding KanCare while this opportunity is available.

The Association would urge the legislature to not prematurely turn down expansion of KanCare. There is no deadline for a decision. We believe that before making a decision to not expand, that the State should understand what flexibilities the federal government is willing to allow which meets the needs of our State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you and we appreciate your consideration of our comments.