

Testimony of Rev. Eleanor B. McCormick, Associate Pastor

Plymouth Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Lawrence, KS

March 16, 2015

Dear Committee Members:

As an ordained clergy person in the United Church of Christ (UCC), my religious heritage compels me to care about the common good and about how our public policies affect the most vulnerable. I submit this testimony in support of KanCare's expansion and believe that limiting KanCare is a step backwards in keeping all Kansans safe and healthy.

I serve a large 1,300 member congregation in Douglas County, where at least 9,000 individuals fall below the current eligibility criteria for KanCare (U.S. Census Bureau estimates). Thanks to the generosity of our members and friends, our congregation has the ability to administer emergency funds from a Pastor's Emergency Account when individuals reach out to us in crisis. The majority of these funds go to assist with medical bills or to pay for basic goods like heat, water and food following a costly medical crisis. I have spoken with and assisted many uninsured individuals through this Pastor's Emergency Account and I have thereby learned that many, despite holding a job, nonetheless fall below the current eligibility criteria for KanCare and arrive at our doorstep as a last resort. In many cases, with the help of insurance, these individuals would have been seen earlier, had access to better quality care and would have participated in preventative care. As a result, the cost of care could have been greatly reduced if these individuals had not fallen back on emergency care, often administered in an emergency room. As institutions, churches are not equipped to dedicate resources towards health care in the most efficient way. I dream of a day when fewer individuals arrive in my office in a health care crisis. I believe that an expansion to KanCare gets us closer to that dream.

Jesus calls us to put the poor, the weak, the sick and the marginalized first. As a pastor I cannot remain silent in the face of the gospel call found in Matthew 25 and I feel compelled to speak for many in my congregation who hope to see the current KanCare program built upon and improved. There are people in our neighborhoods, in our cities, and in our state who are in desperate need of affordable health care - I implore you to speak, advocate and legislate on their behalf. I ask you to truly be the servant of all by expanding KanCare.

Limiting KanCare dangerously diminishes all of our opportunities for healthy and whole lives. I encourage you to vote for an expansion of KanCare.

Sincerely,



Reverend Eleanor B. McCormick

Associate Pastor, Plymouth Congregational Church, Lawrence, KS