

Written Testimony: HB 2319 - Support
House Health and Human Services Committee
March 18, 2015
By: Curtis Sneden, Vice President Government Relations
Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce

Chairman and Members of the Committee:

The Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce would like to express its support for House Bill 2319, which requires 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. KanCare 2.0 would provide access to health care coverage options for newly eligible individuals while employing personal responsibility through cost sharing and rewarding healthy outcomes and responsible health choices.

Health care is among Shawnee County's most important industry sectors. Institutions like Stormont-Vail HealthCare, St. Francis Health, Colmery O'Neil VA Hospital, Kansas Rehabilitation Hospital and Tallgrass Surgical Center are among our largest employers and most respected corporate citizens. The providers that deliver health care services to the citizens of Northeast Kansas, including large hospitals and smaller, specialized practices, account for over 15,000 jobs in Topeka and generate a large fraction of our economic activity. Accordingly, our community and its Chamber of Commerce take a keen interest in health care issues.

Discerning exactly how the Affordable Care Act will impact the citizens of Kansas and its health care providers over the long run is not easy. The law is complicated and so are the issues and questions around it. What is clear is that Kansas' decision thus far not to take part in Medicaid expansion has resulted in lower reimbursement rates for health care providers. Perhaps tens of millions of federal dollars that would have reimbursed Kansas providers have been left on the table. This has made it difficult for providers to recruit doctors and nurses and results in higher premiums and costs for those who have insurance.

The Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce supports strategies and solutions that would help control health care costs, improve outcomes, positively impact the health care delivery system, expand access, support wellness initiatives and create a culture of health in the workplace. The Chamber supports a common sense compromise on the expansion of Medicaid to ensure the ongoing viability of health care providers who serve the uninsured and underinsured.

Accordingly, our organization supports passage of HB 2319. Thank you for your consideration of my comments.