



TO: Kansas Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare
Senator Michael O'Donnell, Chair
FROM: Andrew C. Brown, Senior Fellow
Foundation for Government Accountability Action
SUBJECT: HB 2615 (Support)
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Chairman O'Donnell, members of the committee.

Across the country, millions of the neediest patients lack access to quality medical care. Although the number of uninsured Kansans has been steadily decreasing over the last several years, nearly 150,000 remain uninsured. Many more, even those with insurance, live in medically underserved communities or struggle to receive the care they need because of administrative red tape. There is much work to be done to improve access to quality medical care, and we need to utilize all the tools at our disposal in accomplishing this goal.

My name is Andrew Brown, and I serve as a Senior Fellow with the Foundation for Government Accountability, a nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting better lives for individuals and families through improving health and welfare programs nationwide. I'm excited to speak with you today about one such tool that unleashes the power of healthcare practitioners in Kansas to immediately improve access to health care for her neediest citizens.

House Bill 2615 is designed to improve access to care by incentivizing providers to donate their time and talents serving low-income, uninsured and underinsured patients. Drawing inspiration from Florida's volunteer health services program, HB 2615 has the potential of generating millions of dollars in free care each year. The Florida system, which has been in place since the early 1990s, works by granting medical professionals limited immunity for voluntary care provided to qualified individuals as well as allowing these professionals to earn continuing education credits for each hour of care donated. As a result, the Sunshine State has generated more than \$2.8 billion in care since 1992, and provided nearly 500,000 free patient visits each year. Since 2010, the program has generated an average of nearly \$300 million in donated medical goods and services each year.

The good news is that with existing Kansas law, you're already halfway to having a robust volunteer health services program - House Bill 2615 gives you the last piece of the puzzle. Kansas Tort Claims Act already protects health care providers who render gratuitous services

to medically indigent persons, and further provides that a claim for medical services rendered brought pursuant to the Act shall not be considered by an insurance company when determining the provider's professional liability insurance rate. These important protections make it much easier for professionals to help those in need without the fear of frivolous lawsuits. In short, it frees them up to do what they got into medicine for in the first place - help people.

House Bill 2615 completes the puzzle by allowing healthcare professionals may fulfill one hour of continuing education credit by the performance of two hours of gratuitous services to eligible low income patients up to a maximum of eight continuing education credits per licensure period. For professionals who are required to spend a significant amount of time and money each year earning continuing education hours, these eight free hours are a huge benefit. It's also a reasonable amount that balances incentivizing and rewarding healthcare professionals for serving those in need with ensuring that these professionals stay up to date on the latest research and techniques.

While the data is impressive, HB 2615 is about much more than numbers of visits or the dollar value of care. It's about changing lives. Recently, I had the privilege of speaking with a doctor in Orlando who has dedicated her career to providing volunteer medical services. She told me a powerful story of a truck driver who lost his job because of severe diabetes. Since he was unable to work, he did not have insurance to get the care he needed to get his diabetes under control. Fortunately, he lived in the community where this doctor worked and he was able to get the treatment and care he needed. Eventually, his health improved, which allowed him to go back to work. Thanks to the efforts of this doctor and the volunteer health services program, this man is now working, providing for his family, and has health insurance coverage so that he can stay healthy and working.

There is no single silver bullet to solve the access to care problem, but HB 2615 is a powerful tool with a proven track record of success in providing high-quality care for those who need it most. Based on our research and the 24-years of data available from Florida, we project that Kansas can generate nearly 32,000 free visits and over \$18 million in donated medical goods and services each year. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this important, and potentially life-changing, legislation.