

MINUTES OF THE SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jim Barnett at 1:30 p.m. on February 11, 2009, in Room 106 of the Landon Building

All members were present except Senator Mary Pilcher-Cook who was excused.

Committee staff present:

Nobuko Folmsbee, Office of the Revisor of Statutes, was excused  
Doug Taylor, Office of the Revisor of Statutes  
Kelly Navinsky-Wenzl, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Terri Weber, Kansas Legislative Research Department  
Jan Lunn, Committee Assistant

Presentation on Healthcare Disparities in Kansas by:

Dr. David Williams

Others attending:

See attached list.

Dr. David Williams was introduced; Dr. Williams' presentation related to health care disparities was entitled: "Working Together for a Healthier Kansas" (Attachment 1).

Dr. Williams indicated the charge for the report was to review the current status of health in Kansas and to evaluate the uneven gaps that existed. He reported that good health is necessary to achieve the American dream and that in order to achieve good health, it is necessary to take steps to ensure children have a healthy and prosperous life. He presented infant mortality rates in Kansas compared to national and international rankings and by income status and race. Data related to smoking, obesity, and blood pressure were reviewed.

Dr. Williams spoke about how to close the gap in healthcare disparities. He indicated personal and social responsibility is a key to removing barriers and creating opportunities for better health. Social policies can facilitate healthy lifestyle choices. He spoke about the logic of prevention and discovering ways to live healthier lives. Dr. Williams indicated that redefinition of health policy is also key to reformation; public/private partnerships can impact healthier choices by providing incentives and opportunities to improve health by restricting access to alcohol and cigarettes, providing exercise opportunities, expanding on green spaces, limiting exposure to lead and radon, and supporting crime prevention, etc. Dr. Williams spoke about the importance of social support and education as being one of the strongest relationships to improved health. He provided various examples of public/private partnerships that excelled in educating children, assisting poor, pregnant women and their infants, providing healthcare that assesses underlying causes for illness, and accessing nutritional foods in impoverished neighborhoods.

Dr. Williams concluded that the keys to success are leadership, innovation, community leadership, cooperation, commitment to values, as well as public/private partnerships. He indicated that collaborative work is required, and the men and women of Kansas can make a difference. Dr. Williams stressed the importance of infrastructure development, focusing on improving health particularly in early childhood, improving consequences of living in a chronic poverty environment, and encouraging incentives to businesses that promote communities of wellness.

Chairman Barnett adjourned the meeting at 2:28pm