



**February 8, 2018**

Steve Coen, President and CEO  
Kansas Health Foundation

***Testimony for Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee on SB 316***

Chair Vicki Schmidt and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity present testimony this morning in support of SB 316, expanding tobacco cessation programs for Kansans who are covered through KanCare. Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death and illness in Kansas. Research shows that tobacco use rates are much higher for specific populations. Currently, the adult tobacco use rate in Kansas is 17.2%. However, the rates are higher for those with less than a high school diploma (30%), lower incomes (36.7%) and those experiencing mental illness (45.7%). High smoking rates are associated with serious diseases, higher health costs over time, and reduced life expectancy -- as much as 25 years for Kansans who experience mental illness and smoke.

Tobacco dependence is a powerful and crippling addiction. Decades of research indicate there are several evidence-based ways to treat tobacco dependence that most likely result in a person successfully quitting tobacco and staying in recovery. SB 316 would encourage more at-risk Kansans to stop smoking by removing limits on medications and creating billing codes for cessation counseling for all KanCare recipients. It helps ensure that recipients and providers have access to the type of treatment that is most effective.

In 2016, KHF started a program to reduce tobacco use by Kansans with severe and persistent mental illness. The \$1.7 million initiative involves seven mental health organizations that are working to change the behavioral health system culture so that tobacco use will be assessed and treated like other health needs of patients. The seven organizations across the state are implementing a variety of strategies to strengthen their approaches to reduce tobacco use among this population.

Thank you Senator Schmidt and members of the committee for your consideration of this important issue. We appreciate your partnership in helping to improve the health of all Kansans. SB 316 represents an investment for the long-term health of Kansans. It provides the tools for health providers to help those addicted to tobacco products. More importantly, strengthening tobacco treatment opportunities in the state, especially for those with a mental health and/or substance use diagnosis, will improve quality of life and ultimately save lives.

**Background on the Kansas Health Foundation**

The Kansas Health Foundation is based in Wichita, but statewide in its focus. With a mission to improve the health of all Kansans, KHF envisions a culture in which every Kansan can make healthy choices where they live, work and play. To achieve this, KHF focuses its work in four impact areas: access to affordable health care, healthy behaviors, civic and community engagement and educational attainment. During its 30-year history, KHF has provided more than \$500 million in grants to Kansas communities and organizations, and looks forward to working toward its mission and vision for many years to come.