



January 17, 2020

Honorable Sen. Gene Suellentrop
Chairman, Public Health & Welfare Committee
Room 441-E
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka KS 66612

Dear Chairman Suellentrop and members of the Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee:

On behalf of the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce and our 450 member businesses, representing over 10,000 employees throughout Southeast Kansas, please allow me to voice our overwhelming support for SB 252. Our reasons for taking this position are numerous, but none more so than its anticipated impact on the economic development of communities like Pittsburg.

Health care is a significant driver of the Pittsburg area economy, particularly as it relates to Ascension/Via Christi Hospital-Pittsburg and the Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas. Medicaid expansion would create an additional \$2 million in revenue for both of these entities, which represent two of our largest employers. All told, Medicaid expansion would generate more than \$11 million in new health care spending in Crawford County alone. Ensuring a robust health care community is particularly important for border communities like Pittsburg, as failure to do so will encourage our residents to seek their health care in neighboring states.

An expanded Medicaid program would also ensure a healthier, more productive and efficient workforce to continue fueling our community's and our state's business growth. The largest investment for most companies is the one they make in their employees, and expanding coverage to more than 1,600 uninsured Crawford County residents would increase productivity, while reducing absenteeism and employee turnover. This type of focus on workforce development is increasingly a top consideration in locating and/or expanding a business.

Providing these Kansans with access to routine and preventive care would also create new jobs for doctors, nurses, medical support staff and others, further helping to boost the economy of our region and the state. We've also found that health care tends to play a

role similar to travel and tourism, in that many are now traveling to Pittsburg for their health care, which stimulates business for our restaurants, hotels and other local businesses.

It's for these reasons (and several others) that I strongly urge you to consider the positive impact of SB 252 on our state's health care industry and our economy. This is a common sense solution that would have a far reaching effect on our community and our state. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Blake Benson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Blake Benson

President, Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce