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Sen. Gene Suellentrop, Chair  
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee.  
Re: Support for Senate Bill 252 – Medicaid Expansion

Greetings Sen. Suellentrop:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 252, a bill to expand Medicaid to 138 percent of the federal poverty level in Kansas. The American Lung Association is oldest voluntary public health association in the United States, currently representing the more than 35 million Americans living with lung diseases including asthma, lung cancer and COPD, including over 364,000 Kansas residents.

The American Lung Association believes that all Kansans should have quality and affordable healthcare coverage. Expanding Medicaid eligibility to 138 percent of the federal poverty level – less than \$26,000/year for a family of four—would cover over 150,000 individuals in our state. For lung disease patients, Medicaid expansion would provide individuals with prevention, early detection and diagnostic service as well as disease management and treatment for their conditions. The American Lung Association supports SB252 and is deeply grateful to Senator Denning and the 23 Senators sponsoring the bill, for their leadership on this issue.

Medicaid expansion is critical for patients with and at risk for lung disease. For patients with asthma, coverage through Medicaid expansion means access to prescription drugs and visits with their doctor, both necessary to stay healthy and avoid a costly trip to the emergency department. Access to preventive services through Medicaid expansion also ensures that people have access to services like tobacco cessation support and lung cancer screening at no cost. Research shows an association between Medicaid expansion and early stage cancer diagnosis, when cancer is often more treatable. Lung cancer five-year survival is only 5 percent for those diagnosed at a late (distant) stage after the tumor has spread, but increases to 56 percent for those diagnosed at an early (local) stage before the tumor has spread.

Additionally, Medicaid expansion is associated with improvements in quality measures, including for asthma management, at federally qualified health centers, which are critical healthcare providers for low-income patients. States that expanded Medicaid saw reductions in preventable hospitalizations, especially among patients with chronic respiratory diseases including asthma and COPD. Another recent study found that states that expanded Medicaid had a 34 percent increase in the number of tobacco cessation medication prescriptions relative to the states that did not expand Medicaid. This means more Medicaid enrollees are making quit attempts with proven effective tobacco cessation treatments in Medicaid expansion states. Medicaid expansion is also playing an important role in addressing health disparities—one recent study found that states that expanded Medicaid eliminated racial disparities in timely treatment for cancer patients.

As Kansas moves forward with Medicaid expansion, the Lung Association encourages lawmakers to exclude any barriers to care that could limit the benefits of expansion. Research has shown that even relatively low levels of cost-sharing – including premiums – for low-income populations limit the use of necessary healthcare services. Senate Bill 252 also includes a provision that would require Medicaid enrollees to certify their enrollment in Kansasworks, an employment education program. The Lung Association thanks lawmakers for excluding a work reporting requirement from this bill, but we note that the process of obtaining a certified evaluation and referral to Kansasworks could still create an administrative burden for patients enrolling in Medicaid.

*Please remember the American Lung Association in your will or trust.*