



TESTIMONY OF JOEY HENTZLER  
DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY  
KANSAS APPLESEED CENTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE

SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE COMMITTEE  
**IN SUPPORT OF SB 252**  
JANUARY 23, 2020

Members of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee:

My name is Joey Hentzler; I am the Director of Advocacy for the Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive, and just communities.

**Kansas Appleseed supports SB 252.** More than 150,000 Kansans fall into a health coverage gap created by Kansas' failure to expand Medicaid.<sup>1</sup> Expanding eligibility will support some of the most vulnerable and hardworking citizens in Kansas. If Kansas expands KanCare, 80,000 uninsured adults age 19-64 would become eligible for coverage.<sup>2</sup> 58 percent of uninsured adults in Kansas are living below the federal poverty line.<sup>3</sup> 75 percent of Kansans who would be eligible for KanCare coverage under expansion are part of working families.<sup>4</sup>

**The current coverage gap creates a disincentive to work.** A person who works a minimum wage job earns more than the current KanCare eligibility cutoff, but not enough to qualify for private insurance subsidies. Kansas should remove this barrier to work by expanding eligibility for KanCare to these working families.

We recognize that while SB 252 is not a perfect bill, it is the strongest proposal to expand Medicaid to as many working class Kansans as possible. Monthly premiums in particular represent a barrier to Kansans suffering low wages: The \$25 maximum monthly fee per individual and \$100 monthly fee per family imposes fees up to \$300 annually for individuals and \$1,200 annually for families. For an individual making only \$12,490/year or a family of 4 making only \$25,750/year (the federal poverty line)<sup>5</sup>, this represents a significant percentage of their income. We urge the legislature to pass Medicaid expansion in a way that removes all barriers to lifesaving medicine and healthcare for as many working class Kansans as possible.

Expanding healthcare coverage through Medicaid to low-income Kansans will save lives. For example, in states that have expanded Medicaid, annual mortality rates among near-elderly adults were reduced by 9.4%. Access to healthcare for this population is proven to reduced disease-related deaths.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> State of Kansas - Division of the Budget. "Revised Fiscal Note for SB 38 by Senate Committee on Ways and Means." 2018. [http://www.kslegislature.org/li\\_2018/b2017\\_18/measures/documents/fisc\\_note\\_sb38\\_00\\_0000.pdf](http://www.kslegislature.org/li_2018/b2017_18/measures/documents/fisc_note_sb38_00_0000.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. "Uninsured Adults in Kansas Who Would Become Eligible For Medicaid Under Expansion." 2019. <http://files.kff.org/attachment/fact-sheet-medicaid-expansion-KS>

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. "HHS Poverty Guidelines for 2019." 2019. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>

<sup>6</sup> National Bureau of Economic Research. "Medicaid and Mortality: New Evidence from Linked Survey and Administrative Data." 2019. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w26081>

Our failure to expand KanCare eligibility threatens public safety by putting unnecessary strain on our criminal justice system. Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) spent nearly \$67 million providing medical services to inmates in Fiscal Year 2018.<sup>7</sup> Medicaid funding covering the costs of in-patient hospital stays exceeding 24 hours for incarcerated individuals, mental health and substance abuse services reducing the number of those incarcerated, and coverage reaching newly-released individuals reducing recidivism are estimated to **save KDOC \$11 million annually**.<sup>8</sup> Expanding KanCare coverage will save the state money, alleviate overcrowding in Kansas jails and prisons, reduce recidivism, and improve public safety in Kansas.

Because KanCare expansion provides life-saving support to hardworking low-income Kansans, saves the state money, and makes everyone safer, I urge you to take action on approving SB 252 as soon as possible. Kansans deserve KanCare Expansion.

---

<sup>7</sup> Kansas Department of Corrections. "Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Report." 2019. <https://www.doc.ks.gov/publications/Reports/2018>

<sup>8</sup> Kansas Appleseed. "Unlock Savings: White Paper on Potential Cost Savings to Kansas Correction System through ACA Medicaid Expansion." 2019. [https://www.kansasappleseed.org/uploads/2/1/9/2/21929892/unlock\\_savings- white paper on potential cost savings to kansas correctional\\_s ystem through aca medicaid expansion \\_kansas\\_appleseed.pdf](https://www.kansasappleseed.org/uploads/2/1/9/2/21929892/unlock_savings- white paper on potential cost savings to kansas correctional_s ystem through aca medicaid expansion _kansas_appleseed.pdf)