



Jan. 23, 2020

Chairman Sullentrop and members of the Senate Committee on Public Health & Welfare, thank you for the opportunity to express strong support for SB 252. Kansas Advocates for Better Care (KABC) is a not-for-profit organization, beholden to no commercial interests and is supported almost entirely by donations from citizens who support our mission of improving the quality of care in all long-term settings. KABC was among a handful of non-profit consumer advocacy groups which worked to win passage of the Nursing Home Reform Act of 1987.

KABC strongly supports expanding Medicaid eligibility. Eliminating gaps and providing access to health coverage can improve the overall health of adult Kansans of all ages. Older adults who have had health care as they age are likely to have better health outcomes and consequently lower costs per enrollee as they enter Medicare.

A recent report from the Government Accounting Office (GAO), "Medicare: Continuous Insurance before Enrollment Associated with Better Health and Lower Program Spending," showed older adults who had health insurance for six years prior to Medicare are more likely to report better health after Medicare enrollment. These same people cost Medicare less money (35% lower, on average) in the first years of enrollment because they used fewer or less costly health services. The savings to Medicare was an average of \$2,343 per insured enrollee.

The 2012 Census counts 21,873 uninsured Kansans, ages 50-64, living below the 138% of the federal poverty level. These uninsured Kansans represent 31%, nearly one-third, of the 70,205 persons in this age group. This is almost double the national average of 18%.

These Kansans lack health insurance because they are not working or are working in low paying jobs without employer-based health insurance. They struggle to meet daily expenses, can't afford insurance on the private market and may have little to no retirement. Many are raising their grandchildren. Without health insurance before age 65, they are likely to avoid or defer seeking necessary medical care. As a result, they enter Medicare with chronic and/or untreated health problems.

Expanding Medicaid helps ensure that older adults enter Medicare in better health which ultimately saves Medicare costs when they reach age 65. Adults with regular and preventive health care have a better chance of being able to live at home, thus delaying or avoiding nursing home care altogether.

Please support SB 252.

On behalf of KABC members and volunteers, Mitzi E. McFatrach, Executive Director

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