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Testimony for the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee on Senate Bill 252, Expanding medical assistance eligibility and implementing a health insurance reinsurance program

Chair Suellentrop and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your attention to the critical issue of access to health care for adults in Kansas through an expanded Medicaid Program. The medical assistance expansion will provide health insurance to approximately 150,000 adults in Kansas who do not currently have access to affordable insurance coverage.

We know that adults who have access to health insurance are more likely to use appropriate healthcare when needed for illness as well as preventative care. Health insurance allows Kansans to establish a medical home and utilize mainstream health care providers avoiding unnecessary use of costly Emergency Room care. Research has also shown that children of parents who have access to healthcare are more likely to receive healthcare as well.

Lack of access to health insurance keeps adults with health challenges from receiving the care they need to achieve improved health. Poor health is a very real impediment to work. Lack of access to health care also hinders the ability to establish eligibility for disability due to lack of medical records and evidence of the disability. Access to appropriate health care can improve an individual's ability to secure or maintain employment.

The inclusion of a work referral in SB 252 enhances access to employment connection and possibly skills training for individuals who are healthy enough to engage in employment. The KS Department of Commerce Workforce Centers offer a wealth of resources which can improve the economic condition of low-income households.

A participant in a self-sufficiency program offered by East Central Kansas Economic Opportunity Corporation (ECKAN) was denied disability. She has no income and her household income is less than \$1100 per month. Her health insurance premium as quoted by healthcare.gov would have been more than \$500 and she was not eligible for any premium subsidies.

As stated above, parents who have health insurance are also more likely to access health coverage and health care for their children. This reduces the incidence and cost of unnecessary Emergency Room care. Children who receive appropriate developmental screenings and preventative health care are more likely to receive services which support appropriate growth and development. They are also more successful in early learning and school settings. Kids who stay healthy have better attendance at early learning care and school than kids who experience preventable illnesses. Success in early learning and school increase their ability to achieve positive outcomes in education and adult life.

Thank you for your attention to this important health care access opportunity and for your support of SB 252.