

**Testimony by Tim DeWeese, Director of Johnson County Mental Health Center,  
to the House Committee on Health and Human Services in support of House Bill 2556**

*Expanding medical assistance eligibility  
and enacting the cutting healthcare costs for all Kansans act*

**March 20, 2024**

Chair Landwehr and members of the committee, my name is Tim DeWeese, and I serve as the director of Johnson County Mental Health Center. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony today in **support** of HB 2556, expanding Medicaid in Kansas.

Johnson County Mental Health Center began operating in 1962 by providing outpatient services with four employees in one location. Today, we have over 400 employees in five locations throughout Johnson County providing community-based mental health and substance use treatment services to 12,000 residents annually. We are a department of Johnson County Government, licensed by the State of Kansas as a Community Mental Health Center, accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) International and certified as a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS).

I am providing this testimony today to express Johnson County Mental Health Center's strong support for Medicaid expansion. Expanding Medicaid would remove barriers to treatment, make behavioral health services more accessible and save taxpayer dollars at the state and local levels. 40 other states have expanded Medicaid, including all our neighbors. Kansas has been left behind. It is time to act.

Facing rising costs for housing, food and other essentials, too many in Johnson County and Kansas do not seek treatment for mental illnesses or substance use disorders because of a lack of access to affordable, sustainable care. The consequences of that lack of behavioral health care are significant and include increased incarceration, substance use, hospitalization and suicide rate, as well as struggles with family, school and employment.

If this bill passes and is signed into law, 150,000 Kansans would become eligible for affordable health care, including nearly 8,000 of our neighbors in Johnson County. Nearly one-third of those uninsured individuals who would become eligible have experienced a mental illness or substance use disorder in the past year. We know Medicaid expansion will positively impact accessibility and affordability of care, but just as important is its impact on utilization of care. We would empower more of our most vulnerable neighbors to reach out for help before they experience a crisis or emergency.

Expanding Medicaid would also positively impact Johnson County and Kansas taxpayers. Currently, they are seeing their federal taxes pay for Medicaid in 40 other states, while their property taxes are funding the same services at home. Johnson County Mental Health Center

provides over \$7.2 million dollars of charitable care annually, a significant portion of which — \$3.5 million — would be covered by federal funds if Medicaid were expanded in Kansas. Without Medicaid expansion, Johnson County property tax dollars cover the difference.

Not bringing those federal tax dollars back to Kansas also hinders the state's ability to achieve the full potential of the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) model. The goals of that model are to expand access to comprehensive, community-based behavioral health services that emphasize a whole-person, whole-health approach to care through connections to physical health care, social services and other supports. A 2023 study from the Kansas Health Institute estimates that community mental health centers in Kansas would receive an additional \$17.9 million in annual Medicaid revenues through Medicaid expansion, which includes an additional \$6.6 million because Kansas has implemented the CCBHC model.

Because of its importance to the overall mental, physical and financial health of Johnson County and Kansas, we support HB 2556 and ask the members of the committee to recommend its passage.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.