
KANSAS CITY

MEDICAL SOCIETY

Testimony in Support of SB252
Kansas Innovative Solutions for Affordable Healthcare Act
January 19, 2020

This testimony is presented on behalf of the 3,400 physician members of the Kansas City Medical Society and expresses the Society's support for Medicaid expansion and SB252. The Kansas City Medical Society represents physicians from Wyandotte and Johnson counties as well as the entire Kansas City area. Our members practice in all specialties, from primary care to anesthesiology to surgery. They work in hospitals, have private practices and teach in our fine medical schools.

Our members have identified access to care as a priority issue for the Kansas City region. In 2019, after surveying our membership and careful consideration by our Leadership Council, the Board of Directors voted to advocate for Medicaid expansion in both Kansas and Missouri.

Besides the individual suffering of patients who go without needed care, the access to care problem places tremendous pressure on the whole health care system. Emergency departments see many patients with untreated conditions that should have been handled many months earlier through a primary care physician—yet the patient doesn't have one because of lack of health insurance. And there are many patients who walk into the physician's office without the ability to pay, but we take on their cases anyway. Other patients may not be able to afford prescribed follow-up screenings and treatments, so they postpone these and their conditions worsen.

Rural communities are hit especially hard. Since 2010, eleven Kansas hospitals in rural communities have closed for financial reasons. This forces local residents to travel many miles to the nearest hospital, sometimes putting care out of reach. And hundreds of local jobs have been eliminated; in many of these communities the hospital was the largest employer.

For states like Kansas that have not expanded Medicaid—there are now only 14 of us—the numbers have become increasingly harsh. Since 2012, Kansas has lost nearly \$4 billion in federal Medicaid matching funds. Funds that Kansas taxpayers sent to Washington are going to other states instead of meeting urgent needs in our state.

This is why it is critical that SB252 is enacted. This legislation will:

- Bring Kansas taxpayers' money back from Washington to invest in the health care system in our local communities—creating jobs and the capacity to care for our citizens.
- Help working families. By making health care more accessible, workers will be able to obtain care earlier, in many cases avoiding more physically disabling or financially costly conditions.
- Support rural hospitals and other health care providers whose finances have been strained by caring for large numbers of uninsured patients. This will also reduce pressure on emergency departments.

Most importantly, expanding KanCare will improve the quality of life of thousands of our citizens who would otherwise have been forced to postpone or go without needed health care.

The Kansas City Medical Society believes the time is now to bring to Kansas the federal resources that will enable us to provide the health care our patients need. The Society urges passage of SB252.

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