



Salina Family Healthcare Center
A Federally Qualified Community Health Center
651 E. Prescott, Salina, KS 67401
Medical Clinic ~ (785) 825-7251
Dental Clinic ~ (785) 826-9017
Pharmacy ~ (785) 452-3900

To: House Health and Human Services Committee

From: Robert Freelove, MD

Date: February 8, 2017

RE: Support of HB 2064

Thank you, Chairman Hawkins and Committee members for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2064, The Bridge to a Healthy Kansas.

My name is Rob Freelove and I am the Program Director of the Smoky Hill Family Medicine Residency Program; the CEO of the Salina Family Healthcare Center; and a Family Physician. It is in these roles that I speak today in support of a fiscally responsible expansion of Kancare that works for Kansas.

The Smoky Hill Family Medicine Residency Program was created by your predecessors in 1978 when they passed legislation to create a primary care training site specifically to train family physicians for rural Kansas. And we do it better than anyone else, with over 85% of our graduates entering practice in a rural community in Kansas. We have heard some of the impact the lack of expansion is having on the financial viability of our rural hospitals. Financial viability of the local hospital is one of the first things I tell my residents to consider when they are looking at a future practice site. If we truly want physicians to practice in rural Kansas, we have to ensure that they have somewhere to practice. Expansion of Kancare would go a long way toward bolstering our rural hospitals to do just that.

The Salina Family Healthcare Center is a Federally Qualified Community Health Center in Salina, KS. We meet the healthcare needs of over 10,000 individuals in over 14 counties in North Central Kansas, seeing everyone regardless of their ability to pay. Over 2,000 of our patients are uninsured, accounting for just over 1.1 million dollars in charitable care write-offs last year. Exactly half of those 2,000 would be covered through the expansion of Kancare. The resulting conversion from write-off to revenue would allow us to grow and increase access for the other 5,000+ uninsured and low-income Kansans in our service area that we currently don't have the capacity to see. Additionally, it would make access to primary care affordable for many of those who are currently uninsured so they wouldn't have to choose between putting food on the table or going to the doctor.

As a physician in our clinic, I see that almost daily. People putting off care they need but can't afford until it can't be put off any longer, sometimes after it is too late. The decision not to expand is putting people's lives at stake. People who are working, sometimes two or three jobs, yet don't have health insurance benefits or can't afford to purchase them. People like the 37-year old mother of 3 I saw in clinic a few years ago. She worked full-time as a waitress and part-time as a convenience store clerk, neither of which offered her health insurance. She came in complaining of a sore on her right breast and the physician's assistant who was seeing her wasn't sure what it was. I took one look and knew immediately; it was a breast cancer the size of a half-dollar that had eroded through her skin. It had started small and grown over the past 2 months, but she couldn't afford to go to the doctor and didn't

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have insurance. She would have been covered with expansion, allowing her to access care sooner, however that wasn't an option for her. And while I am happy to say that she is a survivor, it came at an astronomical price when compared to what it would have cost to simply excise her cancer early on in the disease.

The decision to expand Kancare has far-reaching implications: securing practice sites for rural family physicians; generating revenue to increase provider capacity; and assuring early access to much needed health care. None, however, are as important as the fact that it can actually save the lives of Kansans. That, above all other reasons, is why I urge you to support HB 2064.

Robert Freelove, MD