



Feb. 19, 2020

Chairman Carpenter and members of the House Social Services Budget Committee: thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony in support of HB 2549.

Kansas Advocates for Better Care (KABC) joins the KanCare Advocates Network and other consumer advocates in thanking you for your past support to increase the Protected Income Level. The additional funding approved by the 2019 legislature was life-changing for thousands of older adults served through the Home and Community Based Services Frail Elderly waiver and the Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE).

We appreciate the intent of HB 2549 to codify the Protected Income Level and link it to Social Security Income, as allowed by federal law. However, we ask you amend the bill to bring the Protected Income Level in Kansas up to the maximum amount allowed under federal law which is 300% of SSI.

Increasing the amount of income that older adults can keep can be the difference between living and receiving services in their own home or having no option but to move a nursing home to get the care they need. The money they can keep is money they have earned and/or are entitled to such as retirement and military benefits, disability benefits, benefits from a deceased spouse.

At least 25 other states index their PIL at 300% of SSI. By doing making this adjustment, older adults have more options to choose safe, affordable, accessible housing, nutritious food and reliable transportation. It reduces the risk of them having to prioritize paying utility bills over paying for needed medications.

When they are no longer able to manage the costs of living at home, older adults are forced to move into nursing homes. Without adequate income, older adults, many of whom do not have nearby family or a broad community network of support, may have few options other than institutional care. At an annual average cost of \$82,128 to \$92,376 (<https://seniorliving.org/nursing-homes/costs/>) institutional settings are significantly more expensive, and doesn't support an individual's choice to live safely at home.

The costs associated with ending client obligations will be quickly offset by diverting and/or delaying nursing home placement of a few hundred Kansans, streamlining a burdensome and confusing system.

Please help older adults and persons with disabilities by amending HB 2549 to 300% of SSI.

Mitzi E. McFatrach, Executive Director - On behalf of Board of Directors and Members

KABC is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to improve the quality of long-term care for older adults in nursing and assisted facilities and in-home.

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