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Testimony Chairman Gene Suellentrop and the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

January 17, 2020

SB 252

On behalf of the residents of Johnson County and of all Kansas, we urge the committee to pass SB 252 and expand eligibility for receipt of benefits under the Kansas program of medical assistance (KanCare). Expanding eligibility will improve the health and economic well-being of Kansas families.

SB 252 extends medical assistance to individuals up to 138% of the federal poverty level. Currently, KanCare income eligibility levels are as low as 33% of poverty, which is an income of \$7,038 per year for a family of three. SB 252 will provide an additional 150,000 Kansans with health insurance coverage, including 8,758 people in Johnson County alone.

SB 252 also reduces the cost burden of health care for thousands of residents. For the approximately 32,000 Johnson County residents living in poverty, the cost of health care can be a significant portion of the household budget. According to the Economic Policy Institute, health care costs a family of three in the Johnson County area is approximately \$8,490 per year. Medical assistance through SB 252 will enable poor and low-income families to focus on activities that lift them out of poverty and improve their health, rather than worrying about the cost of health care.

The adoption of SB 252 will boost health care spending on residents in Johnson County and throughout Kansas, support job creation, and provide essential health care coverage to thousands of residents. It is estimated Johnson County alone would see \$58,599,778 in new annual health care spending and the creation of 1505 new jobs.

Submitted by: Julie K. Brewer, Executive Director

United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) is a nonprofit agency that provides research and data analysis, leads collaborative planning, and mobilizes resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services in Johnson County and the surrounding region.

Sources: Alliance for a Health Kansas by County Fact Sheets - Kansas Department of Health and Environment, U.S. Census Bureau Small Area Health Insurance Estimates, and Dr. John Leatherman, Kansas State University; U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2018 1-yr estimates; 2019 FPL

Testimony Submitted by the Social Justice Team of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Lawrence,
19 January 2020

Dr. Jacob W. Klipp

The Social Justice Team of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Lawrence, Kansas, wishes to express its support for the current proposed legislation, Senate Bill 252, "Expanding Medical Assistance Eligibility and Implementing a Health Insurance Plan Reinsurance Program. This legislation enjoys the bipartisan sponsorship of 22 Senators. We have been consistent supporters of the Affordable Care Act since its passage by Congress and for the last decade have joined with many Kansans who have pushed for such action to expand coverage and to promote public health across the state of Kansas. In 2017 a Medicaid Expansion bill passed the House and Senate but was vetoed by the governor and in 2019 a similar bill passed the House but did not in the Senate. In the course of campaigning for such expansion, we have had close contact with those across the state who fall into the coverage gap and so cannot avail themselves of health services. Health care makes a profound difference to the quality of life for persons of all ages. Its availability opens up possibilities for a more complete and purposeful life. As Marcillene Dover, a working Kansan who was in the coverage gap, has written: "Somebody is out there debating this as a political issue when it's a moral issue. People should be able to see their doctors if they need to." Medicaid/KinCare expansion is good for Kansas and Kansans from every corner of the state. Delay in action on this important issue has cost Kansas \$3,805,605,030. of federal funds that went to other states to improve health services, while a health service crisis has developed in Western Kansas that included the closing of hospitals and the loss of specialist care for rural areas. Expanding KanCare will expand health care coverage to 150,000 Kansans and bring federal tax dollars into to Kansas to improve quality of life and enhance public health across the entire state. We applaud Governor LAURA Kelley's leadership and the 22 senators from both parties who have sponsored SB 252. We are impressed by the broad coalition of health care professionals who are supporting KinCare expansion, including the Kansas Hospital Association. At present 36 states have acted to expand health care coverage, and it is time for Kansas to join that majority of states. Governor Kelly in her State of the State address called attention to the studies last year, which demonstrated that Medicaid expansion has an impact on mortality rates, maternal health, opioid addiction and hospital closings. Now is the time for our state legislature to act to make Kansas the 37th state to expand Medicaid under terms of the Affordable Care Act. As the Governor noted, no state has reversed its decision on this issue. Much has been written about the collapse of bipartisanship in Congress. Kansas can by timely action demonstrate how bipartisanship can bring great accomplishments, which will enhance Kansas' standing, improve health care and stimulate greater growth in the Kansas economy.