

January 16, 2024

To the Kansas State Legislature:

As health care providers in rural Kansas, we are thankful that our elected officials are united with us in wanting a healthier Kansas. You share our concerns about how health care workforce challenges, uninsured rates and prior authorization issues are impacting Kansans, and particularly those in rural communities who have worse health outcomes than their urban counterparts. You have watched as Kansas has slipped from an all-time high ranking of 8th in 1991, to an all-time low ranking of 31st in the country according to America's Health Rankings. And, perhaps you've wondered if the district you represent will be the next district impacted by the loss of a health care provider or hospital closure.

We write to you today because we also are in agreement that there is no silver bullet to the challenges rural providers face. This upcoming session, we encourage you to look at a comprehensive set of solutions to these problems including shrinking populations, difficulty with workforce recruitment and retention, and uncompensated care. But there is one immediate step you can take to support access to care, retain health care workers and extend health insurance to more Kansans: expanding Medicaid.

Medicaid is a state and federal health insurance program that helps with medical expenses for people who can't afford them. Right now in Kansas, a single mother of two has to make less than \$9,500 per year to qualify. Full time, minimum wage workers make too much to qualify but often don't receive health insurance through their employer and can't afford coverage on the exchange – resulting in a “health coverage gap” for Kansans working in fast food, retail and similar industries.

There are many reasons it's harmful for so many Kansans to be uninsured, including those dedicated to providing health care in communities across our state. Uninsured Kansans are less likely to get access to the care they need, and if they end up in the emergency room, the hospital often has to cover the bill – what we call “uncompensated care.” To address this, the federal government now offers states funding to expand Medicaid to people in that coverage gap. It's a great opportunity. The federal government covers 90 percent of the costs, the states cover 10 percent. Because Kansas hasn't taken advantage of this opportunity, our federal tax dollars are going to support hospitals and health care providers in other states instead of right here at home. Estimates suggest expansion would create roughly [23,000 jobs in Kansas](#), spur [\\$591.7 million in new annual health care spending](#) in Kansas and [decrease uncompensated care costs](#).

It is true that Medicaid expansion would not solve every problem we face, but it would be a significant step forward for preserving essential care in rural communities. Nationwide, rural hospitals are [six times more likely](#) to close in states that haven't expanded Medicaid. Hospitals and providers would be able to afford to recruit and retain more doctors and nurses if Medicaid was expanded. And, rural Kansans would be more likely to get the preventative care they need, resulting in healthier communities all around.

We know better than anyone that the issues rural health care providers face are real and will require all hands on deck to solve. The time is now for leaders to step up to ensure the sustainability of rural health care. Giving up on rural Kansas is not an option. We, the signers below, encourage legislators to take a

step to support a healthier Kansas this legislative session by expanding Medicaid. Our family, friends and your constituents expect and depend on this.

Signed,

Stephen "Stevie" Durkin, CEO, Atchison Community Health Clinic, Inc., Atchison
Mary Jane Dowler, Executive Director, Iroquois Center for Human Development, Greensburg
Michael T. Countryman, CEO, South Central Mental Health Counseling Center, Augusta
Robbin Cole, CEO, Pawnee Mental Health Services, Manhattan
Glenna Phillips, Executive Director, Central Kansas Mental Health Center, Salina
Heather Spaur, Executive Director, Crawford County Mental Health Center, Pittsburg
Amanda Cunningham, CEO, Crosswinds Counseling and Wellness, Emporia
Randy Callstrom, CEO, Wyandot Behavioral Health Network, Kansas City
Matthew Atteberry, Executive Director, Labette Center for Mental Health Services, Parsons
Debra Pochop, CEO, Rawlins County Dental Clinic, Atwood
Amy Falk, CEO, Health Partnership Clinic, Inc., Olathe, Paola, and Ottawa
Elizabeth Keever, CDO, Heartland Community Health Center, Lawrence
David Brazil, CEO, Community Health Center in Cowley County, Inc., Winfield
Teresa Lovelady, President & CEO, HealthCore Clinic Inc, Wichita
Dan Duling, VP Community Partnerships, Community Health Center Southeast Kansas, Pittsburg
Jennifer Miller FNP-BC, APRN, Family Nurse Practitioner, Health Partnership, Ottawa
Jessica Nichols, Family Nurse Practitioner, Health Partnership Clinic, Olathe
Emily Bush, Pediatrician, Health Partnership Clinic, Olathe
Nader Rastgoftar, Dental Director / Dentist, Health Partnership Clinic, Olathe
Edward Herrman, President & CEO, HaysMed, Ellis
Lisa Brooks, CEO, Comanche County Hospital, Comanche
Dennis Franks, CEO, Neosho Memorial Regional Medical Center, Neosho
Sarah Teaff, PhD, FACHE, CEO, Patterson Health Center, Harper
Paul Luce, Administrator, The University of Kansas Health System, Miami
Jimmie Hansel, CEO, Edwards County Medical Center, Edwards
Craig Loveless, CEO, Goodland Regional Medical Center and Rawlins County Health Center, Sherman and Rawlins
Kevin Leeper, CEO, Morris County Hospital, Morris
Lewis Newberry, President & CEO, McPherson Hospital, McPherson
Shae Veach, VP for Regional Operations, HaysMed, Ellis
Doyle McKimmy, CEO, Jewell County Hospital, Jewell
Kevin Kepley, MBA, BSN, RN, CNO, Morris County Hospital, Morris
David McCorkle, CEO, Citizens Health, Colby
Teresa Clark, RN- CEO, Wichita County Health Center, Wichita
Kevin Faughnder, CEO, Norton County Hospital, Norton
Robert Kenagy, MD, President & CEO, Stormont Vail Health, Topeka
Debbie Bruner, CEO, Minneola Healthcare, Clark
Tara Overmiller, CEO, Phillips County Health Systems, Phillips
Jeremy Clingenpeel, CEO, Cheyenne County Hospital, Cheyenne
Aaron Kuehn, CEO, Ness County Hospital District #2, Ness
Kevin Strecker, Senior VP, Ministry Market Executive, Ascension Via Christi, Sedgwick
Kiley Floyd, CEO, Nemaha Valley Community Hospital, Nemaha
Claudio Ferraro, President, Ascension Via Christi St. Joseph, Sedgwick
Laurie Labarca, President, Ascension Via Christi St. Teresa, Sedgwick
Bob Copple, President, Ascension Via Christi Hospital Manhattan, Riley

Joy Scott, President, Ascension Via Christi St. Francis, Sedgwick
Brian Howells, Hospital Administrator, Wamego Health Center, Pottawatomie
Russ Johnson, President & CEO, LMH Health, Douglas
Ashley Taylor, CEO, Medicine Lodge, Barber
Sharon Haun, Councilmember, Grove City Council, Morris
Drew Talbott, President, Ascension Via Christi Hospital Pittsburg, Crawford
Sam Huenergardt, President & CEO, AdventHealth Mid-America Regional & AdventHealth Shawnee Mission, Johnson
Alan Verrill, MD, President & CEO, AdventHealth South Overland Park, Johnson
Dallas Purkepile, President & CEO, AdventHealth Ottawa, Franklin
Joe Buchanan, USD 417, Morris
Emily Dilley, CEO, Kearny County Hospital, Kearny
Marley Koons, CFO, Kearny County Hospital, Kearny
Robin Allaman, CNO, Kearny County Hospital, Kearny
Drew Miller, MD, Chief of Staff, Kearny County Hospital, Kearny
Bob Page, President & CEO, The University of Kansas Health System, Wyandotte
John Worden, Administrator The University of Kansas Health System-Great Bend, Barton
Jodi Schmidt, Executive Director, The University of Kansas Health System Care Collaborative, Johnson
Scott Campbell, CEO, The University of Kansas Health System- St. Francis, Shawnee
Brian Williams, President & CEO, Labette Health, Labette
Todd Willert, President & CEO, Community HealthCare System, Inc., Pottawatomie
David Jordan, CEO, United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, Hutchinson
Sharon S Shepard, LCSW, Clinical Social Worker/Behavioral Health Consultant, Community Health Center in Cowley County, Winfield
Jenny Niblock, CCO, Citizens Health, Colby
Dr. Robert Moser, Executive Director, Kansas Center for Rural Health, Salina
Amanda Mocaby, Clinic Director, Smith County Memorial Hospital, Smith
Jeremy Armstrong, Administrator, Allen County Regional Hospital and Anderson County Hospital, Allen and Anderson
Sandra Dickerson, CEO/ Administrator, Greenwood County Hospital, Greenwood
Nancy McKenzie, P.A., Greenwood County Hospital, Greenwood
Jeremy Rabe, CEO, Trego County-Lemke Memorial Hospital, Trego
Brian Lawrence, President/CEO, Coffeyville Regional Medical Center, Montgomery
George Stover, CEO, Hospital District #1 of Rice County, Rice
Ruth Duling, CEO, Girard Medical Center, Crawford
Joel Phelps, CEO, Salina Regional Health Center, Salina
Harold Courtois, CEO, Memorial Health System, Dickinson
Larry Van Der Wege, Administrator, Lindsborg Community Hospital, McPherson
David Garnas, Administrator, North Central Kansas Medical Center, Cloud
Dan Kelly, CEO, Republic County Hospital, Republic
Carrie Lutz, CEO, Holton Community Hospital, Jackson
Preston Sauers, CEO, Kingman Healthcare Center, Kingman
Brian Barta, CEO, William Newton Hospital, Cowley
Melanie Urban, Administrator, Pawnee Valley Community Hospital, Pawnee
James Kirkbride, CEO, Ellsworth County Medical Center, Ellsworth
Amber Williams, President & CEO, Southwest Medical Center, Seward
Karen Orr, RN, MSN, MBA, CEO, Providence Medical Center, Wyandotte
Valerie Gleason, President & CEO, NMC Health, Harvey
Amanda Cunningham, CEO, Crosswinds Counseling and Wellness, Lyon
Tarah Remington Brown, CEO, The Kansas Academy of Family Physicians, Johnson

Benjamin Anderson, President & CEO, Hutchinson Regional Healthcare System, Reno
Cathy Pimple, CEO, Newman Regional Health, Lyon
Alex Haines, RN MHCL, CEO, St. Luke Hospital & Living Center, Marion
Aimee Zimmerman, CEO, Logan County Health Services, Logan
Mark Rooker, CEO, Hillsboro Community Hospital, Marion
John Smart, Behavioral Health Clinician, Health Partnership Clinic, Olathe
Lisse Regehr, President and CEO, Thrive Kansas, Iola
Erik Unruh, Physician, Iola
Brian Wolfe MD, Staff Physician, Community Health Center SEK, Iola
Rebecca Johnson, Administrator/SEK Local Health Officer, SEK Multi-County Health Department, Iola