

November 6, 2019

The Honorable Brenda Landwehr, Chair  
The Special Committee on Medicaid Expansion

**Reference: The expansion of eligibility for KanCare**

AARP's mission is to help people 50 and older have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. For AARP's more than 306,000 members in Kansas, we strongly urge you to expand Medicaid to include Kansans with incomes up to 133 percent of the federal poverty line (138 percent with the 5 percent income disregard), as set forth in the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Medicaid expansion under the ACA will both *expand access to health care* for people who desperately need it and *save the state money*. This issue is particularly important to Kansans who are 50 or older but not yet eligible for Medicare. Every day, thousands of hard-working Kansans who have lost their jobs or are struggling in jobs without health coverage are denied access to affordable health care. During the historic economic recession, many of these individuals lost their jobs and their employer-sponsored insurance coverage. AARP is committed to helping older Americans who've lost their jobs, are struggling to find new ones, or who are struggling in jobs without health benefits but don't currently qualify for Medicaid. Expanding Medicaid will help these thousands of 50 to 64 year-olds.

Expanding Medicaid will provide coverage for hardworking people who've paid into it throughout their working lives but are now struggling to make ends meet. Older adults are particularly vulnerable to deterioration in function and health status if they do not have health coverage. This plan will give people without insurance access to preventive care that can save lives and ease dangerous and expensive emergency room overcrowding that hurts all of us.

According to research from AARP's Public Policy Institute, expanding Medicaid would provide health coverage for an estimated 20,219 uninsured Kansas residents aged 50-64 who were living at or below 138 percent of poverty in 2010.

Keep in mind that when Kansans without health coverage need emergency room and other hospital care, their bills are unaffordable. When bills are unpaid, hospitals must charge more to cover their losses, and insurance premiums increase – for all of us.

Expansion means that these individuals, those who are the most vulnerable and in most need of care, would be afforded coverage while the state would be able to fund the coverage through the increased federal match. It makes fiscal and practical sense to expand Medicaid while ensuring that there are no reductions or cuts to valuable programs to the most vulnerable and in-need population.

While many Americans were able to access health care in 2014, our friends, neighbors, even family who most need access to affordable healthcare are still struggling without coverage. Expanding Medicaid will give thousands of hard-working Kansans the opportunity to stay healthy and build financial security. Expanding access to affordable care supports caregivers, saves lives and money.

We applaud efforts to find a solution to this critically important issue and we respectfully request your support of the expansion of the KanCare Program.

Respectfully,  
Dr. Maren Turner