



**House Committee on Health and Human Services
Written Only Opponent Testimony on HB2556
Presented by William Wilk, Senior Director of Government Affairs**

Wednesday, March 20th, 2024

Madam Chair and members of the committee, my name is William Wilk, Senior Director of Government Affairs for the Kansas Chamber. The Kansas Chamber represents small, medium, and large-sized businesses across the state advocating for policies to improve the economic climate in Kansas. The Kansas Chamber appreciates the opportunity to submit opponent testimony on HB2556, a bill pertaining to Medicaid Expansion.

Since the Affordable Care Act was enacted by Congress in 2010 and the Supreme Court ruling giving states the option to expand Medicaid eligibility it has been one of the pressing topics in each state during their state legislative session. All but 10 states have yet to expand Medicaid, Kansas obviously being one of those 10 states.

Expanding Medicaid increases the number of individuals eligible for government funded healthcare services, while also removing thousands from private insurance. One of our major concerns with Medicaid Expansion is the cost associated with the program at the expense of already eligible Kansans who are not enrolled today. It is probable that Medicaid Expansion will strain a state's budget and take resources away from other important programs. We are seeing this exact situation in Indiana, as the state faces a \$1 billion shortfall in its current Medicaid budget due to underestimated costs.

According to the Wall Street Journal in an article recently published on March 8th, 2024, they estimate if the 10 states give in to expand Medicaid at least 3.6 million people – mostly able-bodied adults – would be pushed off private insurance and onto Medicaid. This is the opposite direction we should be heading for our state's policy decision.

Along with losing private health insurance, an individual who makes even one dollar over \$19,392 (before taxes), they would lose their government funded healthcare. This disincentivizes able-bodied adults to work when the Legislature has heard for the last few years about the state's workforce shortages. We should be encouraging all Kansans to gain training for employment and upward mobility, where they can receive private health insurance through their employer or earn enough to pay for their own plan if self-employed.

We see repeatedly relying on the Federal Government does not always pan out as expected. Rather than rely on the Federal Government supporting expanded Medicaid, we encourage the legislature to look at ways to improve healthcare access and affordability for all Kansans.

We applaud the efforts and continue to encourage the legislature to expand healthcare access and affordability without Expanding Medicaid. This session the legislature has been looking at ways to increase the provider reimbursement rates in Kansas. This will help all healthcare entities and most importantly patients. More professionals will see and treat Medicaid patients along with receiving more in payments from the state if the reimbursement rate were to increase. Increasing access by eliminating regulatory barriers is another policy decision the Kansas Legislature has improved over the past few years, and we encourage constant analysis to ensure state laws are not overly restrictive out of the fear of competition and not truly public safety.

We believe it is important to note the effect of the public and private entities collaborating in times of need. In 2020, we saw a public/private partnership and collaboration in the likes of which we have not seen for generations. All levels of government local, state, and federal along with all private sector entities working hand-in-hand to provide needed resources and solutions to citizens across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. Partnering with private entities for health care solutions should be considered wherever possible, as the private sector thrives on competition and innovation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB2556, and I am happy to answer any questions you might have at the appropriate time.