



To: Chairman Carpenter, and Members, House Social Service Budget Committee

From: Rachel Monger, VP Government Affairs

Date: February 19, 2019

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2549

Thank you, Chairman Carpenter, and Members of the Committee. I am Rachel Monger, Vice President of Government Affairs for LeadingAge Kansas, the state association for not-for-profit and faith-based aging services. We have 160 member organizations across Kansas, which include not-for-profit nursing homes, retirement communities, hospital long-term care units, assisted living, homes plus, senior housing, low-income housing, home health agencies, home and community-based service programs, PACE and Meals on Wheels. Our members serve more than 25,000 older Kansans each day, and employ more than 20,000 people across the state.

LeadingAge Kansas stands in support of House Bill 2549, and its setting of the protected income level for HCBS and PACE participants to 150% of federal supplemental security income.

In 2019 the Kansas Legislature raised the Medicaid protected income limit to \$1,177 per month. This was the first increase in the protected income limit since 2008, and the decade-long wait left many people living under desperate circumstances. In order to avoid another long wait before such an increase, we support a yearly cost of living adjustment to allow more people to live in the community with dignity and avoid premature nursing home placements. Changing the protected income limit to 150% of SSI will eliminate the client obligation for more than 90% of participants, and will make assisted living and PACE participation more financially viable.

Increasing the protected income limit for seniors also expands the types of senior housing that is available to them. Currently, low-income seniors who are no longer able to live independently are almost always admitted straight into a nursing home. Because Medicaid does not pay room and board outside of a nursing home, very few assisted living (and similar settings) accept persons with Medicaid. Increasing the protected income limit will free up more personal resources to pay room and board, and will increase the number of senior housing providers able to accept seniors with limited resources. Nursing homes are by far the most expensive care setting for seniors, and any avoidance of unnecessary nursing home placement is a big cost saving to the state Medicaid program.