



January 28, 2019

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf the Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 36.

The Chamber supports this legislation because it would make great strides towards addressing a major and significant concern that an overwhelming number of our members, as well as Kansans in general share: the availability and affordability of health insurance. Improving access to affordable health insurance improves overall health, which is a major contributor to workforce development, economic growth and the overall viability of Kansas communities.

The Chamber is proud to represent a wide array of businesses and not-for-profit partners throughout south-central Kansas. While our Chamber membership consists of some of the state's largest employers, the majority of our member firms employ fewer than 50 people.

Kansas law currently creates a barrier for organizations like the Chamber and other similar trade associations and business leagues from addressing the need for affordable health insurance for our members. While we are allowed to offer association health plans, the statutory requirement that if a single member employs fewer than 50 people, then the entire group must be rated at the small group rate raises the premiums to untenable levels. It is for this reason that you see virtually no association health plans offered in Kansas.

SB 36, if passed along with its counterpart legislation would fix the concerns mentioned above. Passage would truly allow for small group health plans, leading to better outcomes regarding community health, workforce development, economic growth, and vibrant communities. Considering the overall benefits to the state of Kansas, it's difficult to find a single reason not to pass this legislation.

With that Mr. Chairman, we urge the Committee to report SB 36 favorable for passage.

Very truly yours,

Jason P. Watkins
Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce