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Healthy People Build Strong Communities

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Testimony of the Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) to the

Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

Proponent for SB 252 • January 21, 2020

Chairman Suellentrop and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to supply written testimony in support of Senate Bill 252 regarding expanding medical assistance eligibility. KALHD is a nonprofit association dedicated to strengthening local health departments for the purpose of improving and protecting the health of all Kansans.

SB 252 will make tremendous strides in providing insurance coverage to Kansans currently without. Local health departments work to protect population health at large, and often run safety net services (such as clinics) to assist those who lack enough insurance coverage or face other access to care challenges. The resources to provide such services are finite. By expanding the population that can access Medicaid it becomes possible for citizens to find more options on receiving care. The providers receive insured compensation for their work and the limited resources in the system to support the safety net go further.

In addition, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation<sup>1</sup> people without health insurance are more likely to skip preventive services and report that they do not have a regular source of health care. While this has a clear and direct impact on their own individual health (missing things such as checks on cholesterol, blood pressure, and cancer screenings) there can also be a population health impact when contagious diseases are not caught and treated early.

Safety net providers, like the local health departments, have limited resources and service capacity. Insurance permits citizens to access care in a compensated manner that reduces stress on the safety net system and results in better health outcomes. It is for these reasons that KALHD supports SB 252 and asks that you recommend it favorably.

Respectfully,

Dennis Kriesel

Executive Director, Kansas Association of Local Health Departments

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<sup>1</sup> Source: The Uninsured and the ACA: A Primer – Key Facts about Health Insurance and the Uninsured amidst Changes to the Affordable Care Act (1/25/2019): <https://www.kff.org/report-section/the-uninsured-and-the-aca-a-primer-key-facts-about-health-insurance-and-the-uninsured-amidst-changes-to-the-affordable-care-act-how-does-lack-of-insurance-affect-access-to-care/>