

January 23, 2020

The Honorable Gene Suellentrop, Chair  
Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

**Reference: Senate Bill 252**, Expanding medical assistance eligibility and implementing a health insurance plan reinsurance program

Good morning Chairman Suellentrop and members of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee. I am Dr. Maren Turner, Director of AARP Kansas. Thank you for this opportunity to submit our written testimony in support of Senate Bill 252 and the expansion of eligibility for KanCare.

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members nationwide, and over 300,000 members in Kansas, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment.

AARP Kansas applauds the bipartisan progress of Kansas' Governor Kelly and both Republican and Democratic legislators in their efforts to expand health care coverage for nearly 150,000 low-income Kansas adults. The Kansas Innovative Solutions for Affordable Health Care Act ("Kansas Innovative Solutions"), as set forth in SB 252, will provide important healthcare coverage to many Kansans who otherwise have no access to adequate or affordable care. In particular, AARP would like to commend features under SB 252 that would:

- expand Medicaid to individuals with an adjusted gross income of 100 – 138% of the federal poverty level,
- accomplish Medicaid Expansion without a burdensome Medicaid beneficiary work requirement, and
- establish Kansas Innovate Solutions without short-sighted benefit suspensions that could lead to adverse health consequences for Kansans in need of healthcare.

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According to research from AARP's Public Policy Institute, expanding KanCare 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.

KanCare expansion will both expand access to health care for people who desperately need it and save the state money. Access to health care 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, including 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 KanCare. Expanding KanCare will help thousands of these 50 to 64 year-olds.

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.

Bottom line: Expanding KanCare makes smart economic sense for our state. It will create jobs, and it will help the hospitals that serve Kansas residents keep their doors open without losing the doctors and nurses we depend on. It will give thousands of hard-working Kansans the opportunity to stay healthy and build financial security. Expanding access to affordable care saves lives and money.

Therefore, we respectfully request your support of Senate Bill 252 and expansion of the KanCare Program.

Thank you for the chance to provide initial comments on SB 252. AARP Kansas looks forward to providing additional detailed comments once related federal waivers are released for public comment.

Sincerely,

Dr. Maren Turner  
Director, AARP Kansas