

February 22, 2023



As persons who have dedicated ourselves to living the gospel, we believe it is deeply immoral for more than 150,000 Kansans to continue to go without medical care.¹ We write today to ask that you work urgently in the upcoming legislative session to expand Medicaid in Kansas, a policy supported by more than 70% of Kansans.²

As Catholic women religious, we built the first private hospitals in Kansas, whose first patients were cared for without asking how or whether they could pay. We have staffed schools, hospitals, and orphanages in Kansas for over a century. We recognize suffering and need when we see it. We ask that you trust us when we tell you that Kansans – through no fault of their own - are distressed and dying from unmet medical needs because they do not have reliable, affordable access to health care.

This issue is also a matter of economic justice. The current income limit to qualify for KanCare is less than \$8,345 a year for a family of three, which is less than \$4 per hour. Our society has long denied working people the right to live healthy, whole lives. We believe what makes Kansas great is our ability to put politics aside to care for our neighbors and community when we see them in need. Passing Medicaid Expansion is the test of whether we are who we claim to be as Kansans.

There are economic reasons to support expansion as well. To date, Kansas has lost over 6 billion dollars by refusing to expand Medicaid.³ Cities and the surrounding rural communities in Wellington, Fort Scott, Oswego, Horton, and Independence have all lost hospitals in recent years. Medicaid expansion would provide struggling hospitals with the critical resources they need to continue operating in some of Kansas' most remote and impoverished communities.

Finally, we know that Medicaid Expansion is a matter of racial justice. In Kansas, those in communities of color are three times more likely than those in primarily white areas to lack any form of health insurance.⁴ As a state, we are morally obligated to reduce these disparities and to ensure communities of color have equal access to healthcare. The Governor's Commission on Racial Justice and Equity also recommended expanding Medicaid in order to reduce barriers to healthcare access for people of color.⁵

We, the 212 undersigned Sisters and Associates, ask that the legislature expand Medicaid without delay or barriers to provide Kansans life-saving care and end this injustice. Just as Christ commissioned the 12 apostles in Matthew 10:8, we hope you will answer the same call: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons; freely you have received, freely give."

¹ Infographic: Health Insurance in Kansas 2021. Kansas Health Institute. Nov. 17th, 2022. Retrieved January 6, 2023, from <https://www.khi.org/articles/infographic-health-insurance-in-kansas-2021/>

² New poll: Overwhelming majority of Kansans support Medicaid expansion. American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. (2022, October 10). Retrieved January 6, 2023, from <https://www.fightcancer.org/releases/new-poll-overwhelming-majority-kansans-support-medicaid-expansion>

³ Home. Alliance for a Healthy Kansas 2022. (2023, January 4). Retrieved January 6, 2023, from <https://expandkancare.com/>

⁴ Llopis-Jepsen, Celia. "Kansas and Missouri Health Care Is Saddling People of Color with Debt." KCUR 89.3 - NPR in Kansas City, KCUR, 20 July 2022, <https://www.kcur.org/news/2022-07-19/kansas-and-missouri-saddle-people-of-color-with-medical-debt>.

⁵ CREJ Report July 1 2021 Final - Governor of the State of Kansas. 1 July 2021, https://governor.kansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CREJ-July-2021-Report_FINAL.pdf.