



KanCare Expansion Bill Hearing Scheduled for the KS House Committee on Health and Human Services



ALLIANCE FOR A
HEALTHY KANSAS

Despite the uncertainty in Washington, advocates and supporters of KanCare expansion in Kansas have made their voices heard. The House Health and Human Services Committee will hold hearings on [HB 2064](#). Testimony from proponents will be heard on **February 8**.

- **If you would like your voice heard:**

- You can submit written testimony **by February 1** to Alliance for a Health Kansas at testimony@expandKanCare.com. Address testimony to Chairman Hawkins and the House Health and Human Services Committee. Let them know how important it is to expand KanCare and how it would affect your organization, your clients and patients, your family and community.
- Or you can contact House Health and Human Service Committee members directly. A list of committee members can be found [here](#). Click on the legislators' names for contact information and let them know your thoughts **prior to the February 8** hearing.

HB 2064 extends medical assistance to individuals up to 138% of the federal poverty level. Currently, income eligibility levels are as low as 33% of poverty for some Kansans to qualify for KanCare - which is an income level of \$6,653 per year for a family of three.

Under the proposed *Bridge to a Healthy Kansas* program, more than 150,000 Kansans will receive health insurance coverage - approximately 9,500 in Johnson County alone.

HB 2064 will also reduce the cost burden of health care for thousands of residents. For the more than 30,000 Johnson County residents living in poverty, the cost of health care can be a significant portion of the household budget. According to the Economic Policy Institute, health care costs a family of three in the Johnson County area more than \$5,700 per year.

Bi-partisan Senate Health Committee Leaders Introduce SB 95 to Help Families "SOAR"

Sen. Vicki Schmidt (R-Topeka) and Sen. Laura Kelly (D-Topeka) yesterday announced a bi-partisan effort to enact commonsense, fiscally responsible reforms to lift low-

income Kansas families out of generational poverty. The "SOAR" Act (Strategic Opportunities to Achieve Results) will expand Kansas families' access to the support they need to obtain high-quality job training. Schmidt serves as the Chair of the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee, while Kelly serves as the Ranking Minority Member. A hearing on the "[SOAR Act](#)" will be held on Tuesday, February 7, 2017.

"All Kansans want less reliance on public assistance, but we need to think more strategically about how to achieve that goal," said Schmidt. "Some safety net barriers actually cost Kansas taxpayers more in the long run. We need modest but meaningful solutions to guarantee that short-term restrictions don't create long-term consequences. This proposal ensures Kansas babies and toddlers will get the food and support they need to grow up healthy, while moms and dads get the training or education they need to obtain good-paying jobs and move off welfare for good."

The "SOAR" Act offers strategic reforms to help low-income Kansas families get ahead and stay there:

- Exempts parents attending school from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) work requirements and the 24-month lifetime limit for child care assistance, enabling Kansas moms and dads to complete academic or job training programs that exceed 24-months;
- Exempts single mothers of infants from TANF work requirements for 12 months after giving birth, protecting the health of both mom and baby while saving Kansas thousands in costly infant child care assistance;
- Strengthens state flexibility by clarifying that waivers for federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) work requirements can only be requested during challenging economic times, when unemployment is high and jobs are scarce;
- Reduces red tape and administrative costs by enabling the Kansas Department for Children and Families to accept voice authorization for the public assistance application from verified and reliable third parties (such as Harvesters Community Food Network).

If you would like your voice heard, a list of committee members can be found [here](#). Click on the legislators' names for contact information and let them know your thoughts **prior to the February 7 hearing**.

Why this Matters in Johnson County:

- In Johnson County, one in 19 people, or 30,400 county residents, lived below the federal poverty level in 2015. Of those residents, 13,273 live in extreme poverty - 37% of which were children.
- Extreme poverty is defined as less than 50% of the federal poverty level or an income of \$840 a month for a household of three. Currently, the TANF income limit in Kansas for a household with at least one dependent child under age 18 is 28% of the federal poverty level which is equivalent to less than an income of \$475 a month for a family of three.
- Harvester's data from Feeding America note's that Johnson County is home to approximately 65,000 food insecure residents, 38% of which are children. Of these residents, 30% fall within the income level to qualify for SNAP assistance.

- There has been a 66% decline in Johnson County families enrolled in TANF over the last five years as policy guidelines and how the state allocations these dollars have changed. However, poverty continued to grow during this same time period.
- Since 2007, Johnson County's population has grown by 11%, while poverty has grown by 38% in the county, more than three times the rate of overall population growth.

Our mission: Provide data analysis, lead collaborative planning and mobilize resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services.

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