

Medicaid Expansion in Kansas: A Comprehensive Case for KanCare Expansion

Introduction:

Medicaid expansion, a pivotal component of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), remains a topic of significant debate across the United States. While many states have embraced this expansion, Kansas remains on the list of states yet to adopt it. This white paper presents a compelling case for the expansion of KanCare, Kansas's Medicaid program, drawing from recent data, research, and real-life stories of Kansans affected by the current healthcare coverage gap.

1. Understanding the Coverage Gap:

In Kansas, a significant number of individuals find themselves in a health insurance coverage gap. These are hardworking Kansans who earn too much to qualify for KanCare but too little to receive financial assistance for private insurance. This gap represents a significant barrier to accessing essential healthcare services. KanCare expansion could potentially provide health coverage to 150,000 Kansans, bridging this gap and ensuring that they have access to affordable healthcare¹.

2. Economic Implications of KanCare Expansion:

- **Economic Growth:** States that have expanded Medicaid have witnessed increased tax revenues and job creation in the healthcare sector. For Kansas, this could mean a boost to the local economy, creating jobs and increasing state revenues.
- **Financial Stability for Hospitals:** Hospitals often bear the financial burden of treating uninsured patients. Expansion would reduce the uncompensated care costs for hospitals, ensuring their financial stability, especially in rural areas.
- **State Savings:** With the federal government covering a significant portion of the expansion costs, Kansas stands to save in healthcare expenditures in the long run.

3. Health Benefits of KanCare Expansion:

- **Improved Health Outcomes:** With more individuals having access to preventive care and treatments, the state would witness better health outcomes for Medicaid beneficiaries. This includes early detection of diseases, better management of chronic conditions, and overall improved health metrics.
- **Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment:** Expansion would provide much-needed resources for mental health and substance use disorder treatments, addressing a significant gap in the current healthcare system.

4. The Current State of Medicaid Expansion in Kansas:

Despite the clear benefits, Kansas remains one of the few states that have not adopted Medicaid expansion. This decision has left many residents without an affordable coverage option, leading to potential health and financial risks¹.

5. Real Stories from Kansans:

Personal stories highlight the human aspect of policy decisions:

- **Tammi:** Unable to see and thus unable to work, Tammi wishes to get her eyes fixed to return to work and finish paying off her house¹.
- **Jaime:** A father and provider for his family, Jaime emphasizes the importance of family unity and care¹.
- **Jim:** Previously insured as a seasonal employee, Jim lost his insurance after his job ended, making health insurance unaffordable¹.
- **Chandra:** A poet from Wichita, Chandra shares the story of her mother, Jo Anne, who never had access to affordable healthcare¹.

6. The Impact on Rural Hospitals:

Rural hospitals in non-expansion states face significant financial challenges. The cost of providing care for uninsured and underinsured individuals can be overwhelming. For instance, the CEO of William Newton Hospital in Winfield, Brian Barta, highlighted that the cost of providing care for these individuals is about 2.5 million dollars. Expanding coverage would help reduce this burden¹.

7. Benefits to the Behavioral Health System:

A study from the Kansas Health Institute indicated that KanCare expansion would lead to increased resources for behavioral health providers, decrease the costs of county jails in Kansas, and reduce the number of children entering the Kansas foster care system due to neglect¹.

8. Public Opinion on Medicaid Expansion in Kansas:

According to the Docking Institute of Public Affairs' "Kansas Speaks Fall 2022" report, when asked about Medicaid expansion, respondents indicated varying levels of thought on the issue. However, when presented with the fact that about 10% of the expansion would be paid by Kansas and 90% by the federal government, and that expanding Medicaid would provide health coverage to approximately 150,000 Kansans and financially benefit rural hospitals, a significant portion of respondents showed support for the expansion².

9. Addressing Concerns and Opposition:

While there's significant support for KanCare expansion, it's essential to address concerns and opposition. Concerns often revolve around the cost to the state, potential misuse, and the belief in limited government intervention. By providing clear data, showcasing the benefits, and ensuring stringent checks and balances, these concerns can be addressed.

10. The Road Ahead for Kansas:

With the potential benefits of Medicaid expansion clear, it is crucial for Kansas to take action. The state stands to gain both economically and in terms of the health and well-being of its residents. As other states move forward with expansion, Kansas risks being left behind, with its residents bearing the brunt of the consequences.

11. Conclusion:

Medicaid expansion is not just a policy decision; it's a commitment to the health and well-being of Kansans. The expansion of KanCare would ensure that tens of thousands of Kansans have access to affordable healthcare, leading to better health outcomes, economic growth, and a stronger state overall.

Footnotes

1. [Alliance for a Healthy Kansas 2022 ↵ ↵² ↵³ ↵⁴ ↵⁵ ↵⁶ ↵⁷ ↵⁸](#)
2. The Docking Institute of Public Affairs: Kansas Speaks Fall 2022, Page 46. [↵](#)