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New Survey Shows Statewide Bipartisan Support for KanCare Expansion

Topeka – A new statewide survey finds that almost 8 in 10 Kansas voters (78%) support expanding KanCare, the state’s Medicaid program, so that more low-wage Kansans can qualify for health coverage. Kansas is one of 12 states nationwide that has not expanded its Medicaid program, leaving thousands of residents with no affordable health insurance options.

The survey also found that many Kansans are worried about rising prices for food, gas, living expenses, and many have significant medical debt. Nine in 10 (89%) of those polled said they are concerned about health care costs and 82% agreed that expanding KanCare will help protect Kansas families from incurring medical debt during these difficult times.

“Costs are rising, and Kansans are paying more to take care of themselves and provide for their families,” said April Holman, Executive Director of the Alliance for a Healthy Kansas. “This research shows Kansans are looking for ways to keep costs in check and demanding that legislators take steps to expand KanCare now to do so. Now is the time to invest in our state and ensure that Kansans have access to the care they need when they need it, or everyone will keep paying the price.”

KanCare is a health insurance program for low-income children, pregnant women, seniors, and people with disabilities. It covers doctor visits, hospitalizations, prescriptions, mental health care, and other basic services. In Kansas, there are strict limits on who currently can qualify. For example, an uninsured parent in a family of three earning more than \$8,345 annually, or \$4 an hour, and single adults without children are not eligible at all. Expanding KanCare would allow single adults and parents earning more than \$8,345 a year to qualify for coverage. Changing KanCare’s income eligibility would immediately make 150,000 low-wage Kansans eligible for affordable health insurance.

The statewide [survey](#), conducted in December 2021, shows that support for expanding KanCare is statewide and spans political parties, including:

- 85% of people in urban communities, 79% of residents in suburban areas, 76% residents of small towns, 73% of people in rural areas.
- 96% of Democrats, 76% of Independents, 65% of Republicans.

The number of low-wage Kansans who cannot afford health insurance keeps going up and that means more in ER bills, increased uncompensated care for hospitals, and untreated mental and physical health

needs. This means individuals, families, and businesses in Kansas end up paying more for health care. “Expanding KanCare keeps the cost of uncompensated care down, reducing health care costs for everyone,” said Matthew Schmidt, CEO of Health Ministries Clinic. “It also makes much-needed investments to strengthen our hospitals, clinics, and provider networks, particularly in rural areas where we face hospital closures that will devastate not only access to care, but jobs and the economic engine of these communities.”

KanCare expansion would add nearly 23,000 new jobs to the state’s economy and increase economic output by \$17 billion. In fact, neighboring states of Oklahoma and Missouri expanded Medicaid last year, meaning every state that borders Kansas has now expanded Medicaid.

“Expanding KanCare will increase economic activity and ensure that Kansas stays competitive. Expansion will increase the health of our workforce, strengthen our businesses, and enhance our competitiveness in keeping Kansas a great place to live, work and raise a family,” said Tracey Osborne Oltjen, President & CEO of the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce.

[The Alliance for a Healthy Kansas](#) sponsored this [statewide survey](#) to understand Kansas voters’ views about KanCare (Medicaid) expansion. The non-partisan research firm PerryUndem conducted the survey. The survey polled 613 likely voters from December 20 – December 30, 2021 by telephone. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.96 percent.

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