

# what medicaid means to kansas



ALLIANCE FOR A  
HEALTHY KANSAS

**SPRING  
2025**



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# About this book

In response to the threat of up to \$880 billion in federal Medicaid cuts, the Alliance for a Healthy Kansas hosted a series of *Community Conversations on Medicaid* in each of the four Kansas Congressional districts during the week of April 21, 2025. The goal of these meetings was to educate Kansans about the attempt to withdraw a significant portion of funding for the Medicaid program in the upcoming decade and gather their concerns and feedback about the proposed cuts.

The Alliance advertised the *Community Conversations on Medicaid* broadly, using our advocacy network, targeted outreach to community leaders and organizations, and the media to inform the public about the meetings. Each member of the Kansas Congressional delegation was invited to attend the events in person and the events were streamed live on Facebook, allowing interested parties to watch the conversations remotely during and after the events. The full recordings are posted on the Alliance's YouTube channel for long-term availability.

The conversations took place at libraries in Topeka, Wichita, Salina, and Shawnee, with more than 200 individuals attending in person and more watching and commenting online. Each event lasted one hour, starting with a brief introduction and focusing on individual comments from audience members. In some cases, the speakers had signed up online in advance to speak and in other cases the speakers decided in the moment to share their concerns.

While each of the events had its own unique mix of speakers, several themes emerged from the conversations. Many expressed concern about potential cuts to Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) that allow people with disabilities to remain in their homes as opposed to moving into institutional settings. HCBS waivers are one of the areas where there is state flexibility as to participation and level of funding. When states have fewer dollars to work with, they need to increase state spending or reduce services that are not mandatory. This leaves things like HCBS services and provider rates, which are set at the state level, in jeopardy if federal Medicaid dollars are cut.

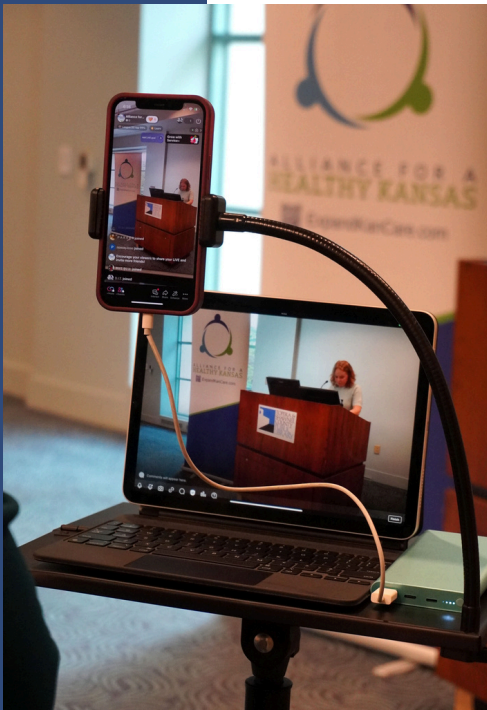






Other topics that were raised at most or all of the *Community Conversations* included concerns about:

- seniors paying for nursing home care through Medicaid;
- children covered by Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and the lasting physical and developmental impact of a healthy start in life;
- adults and children with mental health conditions receiving care through Medicaid;
- additional bureaucracy and administrative burdens if work requirements are introduced in Medicaid, making it more difficult for working people to retain coverage; and
- the stability of the rural health care system if even fewer Kansans have health coverage after the cuts.



An additional theme that emerged at each of the meetings was that Kansans need more access to Medicaid coverage, not less. Speaker after speaker at the *Community Conversations* raised the need for Medicaid expansion in Kansas, noting that there is already a coverage gap for low-wage adults in the state. Many described their long-time advocacy for expansion in Kansas and their ongoing determination to pass legislation enabling more Kansans to obtain health coverage through expansion.

This publication highlights some of the speakers and concerns that were raised in each of the Congressional district meetings. You can use the QR code and information below to see the full recordings of each meeting.



**April Holman,**  
Executive Director  
May 2025



To view the full recordings of the *Community Conversations on Medicaid*, use this QR code or visit the Alliance's YouTube channel at [YouTube.com/@ExpandKanCare](https://www.youtube.com/@ExpandKanCare)

# DISTRICT 1



SALINA | APRIL 23, 2025



We don't have an extremely wealthy community. We have a lot of people that are operating in the margins all the time. They're living paycheck to paycheck; they need good quality health care and they can't afford it. And they keep trying to get ahead and they can't get there...**We can do difficult things. We need you guys to have the courage to do these things.**

- John Blanchard



"I receive health care services at the V.A. clinic here in Salina...**Having access to affordable, professional, comprehensive, and actually accessible health care directly translates into significantly improved quality and quantity of life.**"

- James Vint



"I work for a treatment center here in Salina, and I work with our youth primarily. I have children who are waiting three, four months to be able to get into treatment for their addiction. I have children who are in need of treatment but cannot [get it]...Their parents don't have insurance. And I have children who are overdosing and dying in our community...**Without affordable insurance, we are unable to get our adolescents the help that they truly need.**"

- Chelsey Eberwein



"By the end of [his freshman] year, [my son Will] was in a severe depression. And he stopped going to school...But by February of his sophomore year he was able to get an SED [Severe Emotional Disturbance] waiver and get on Medicaid. And that took care of all his medical bills, all the wild medications...Medicaid was also there for Will when he fractured his knee one night playing basketball at a church. He ended up having to [take an] ambulance down to Wichita's children's hospital for emergency surgery. **And we wouldn't have been able to manage financially through all that...So without Medicaid, I don't think we would have made it.**"

- Cori Sherman North



“While I was working and serving in the state of Colorado, the global pandemic hit and I lost my full-time job with full-time benefits. I was forced to ‘gig’ my way to survival and I worked three jobs...It was a lot, especially for a parent of two young children...**Had I stayed in Kansas through the pandemic, my family would not have had health care during a global pandemic that forced us to lose that health care.**”

- Rev. Dr. Mandy Todd



We have heard from families who have said they will forgo prenatal visits and important postpartum visits if they have to pay for them out-of-pocket. We know moms will always prioritize their baby’s care, meaning that moms will go without the care they need if forced to choose what medical bills to pay. **Maternal deaths are already too high. Cuts to Medicaid would only make this situation worse.**

- Brenda Bandy



“**The idea that we would have less Medicaid is reprehensible.** It’s bad enough that we don’t have expanded services...We have too many people at home who could be working but can’t because they can’t get medicine, so their health conditions go untreated...

Everyone in here has a stake in this whether you need Medicaid personally or not.”

- Dr. Trent Davis



“We had a lady who lives on her own – very resourceful. She lives in a wheelchair. If she didn’t have Medicaid, she wouldn’t have a way to get around because it broke...Broken things like wheelchairs, vehicles, things like that, they can never afford and pay for because they can’t ever have more than \$2,000 of resources. **So without the help of Medicaid helping them take care of a few basic needs, they would be completely without hope.**”

- Juaacklyn Jackson



“We’ve heard each other loud and clear...**There’s not just a drought of rain in this state. There’s a drought of committed humanitarian representation in this state.** And those representatives need to wake up, smell the coffee, and get into action.”

- David Norlin



# DISTRICT 2

TOPEKA | APRIL 21, 2025



"I worked as a social worker in a nursing home for most of my career and over half the residents ran out of funds quickly after they were admitted. **Most of these people had worked hard all their lives and never thought they would need Medicaid...**[My husband and I] are close to 80 years old and cannot afford long-term care insurance. We have aches and pains and some memory loss, and I am very hard of hearing...We may well need nursing home care at some point. **This is not a time to recklessly cut funding to Medicaid.** Jesus helped people who needed help. He did not stop to consider whether they were deserving or not."

- Elvera Johnson



"If this passes in D.C., what that really means is that less money is coming into Kansas. **Our Kansas legislators are going to be making decisions about who does or who does not have medical coverage, who does or does not have the services they need...They're going to start looking at optional programs...**So they have to decide about her program, or my son with autism's program, or somebody with a physical disability that was just in a car accident, or one of our elders who is getting to the point where they need to be assisted."

- Shari Coatney



I'm a caregiver for my 91-year old dad. When someone has any type of dementia, they have a hard time perceiving what is real, what is safe. They kind of lose their sense of logic, not just their memory and their physical ability. So it gets harder and harder to take care of or keep the person safe...**Without Medicaid, we would be up the proverbial creek without a paddle...We would be lost.**

- Julie Avard



"Jacob has a brain injury from a traumatic birth, which caused his cerebral palsy and his other disabilities. Because of Medicaid funds, Jacob is able to go to a day service program where he does activities that he enjoys with friends and peers. **And he's also able to still live at home with the people that know him best to help take care of him. Because of Medicaid and because of the ability to support him, [he does not have to] live in an institution.**"

- Kathy Keck

“

I'm a nurse, and I have a question for the people who are thinking about cutting Medicaid: What do you want us to do? **What do you want us to do in health care? Are we supposed to take someone in the middle of cancer treatment and say, 'Well, you're done, go home?'** If we're a long-term care nurse and our patient's Medicaid is done, are we just supposed to evict them? Do we just say goodbye to our patients and say goodbye to their health care? My challenge would be to any lawmaker that wants to cut Medicaid: **I want you and your staff to commit to coming to work with some of us when we have to tell them no.**

- Rebecca

”



“What I'm most worried about right now are the seniors that are already in nursing homes. You know, what's going to happen to them? They'll be out on the street. I ask Congresspeople: are you going to put Grandma on the street? **Robbing the poor to give to the rich is terrible policy. In fact, I think it's inhuman.**”

- Elinor Cowell

“

I am a parent of someone with a serious emotional disability, also known as mental illness, also known as all kinds of different, very difficult conditions. I'd like to remind people making decisions that mental health care is health care. We're connected...**And so please, when you're considering cuts, don't parse us out into pieces. This is life and death and people will die.**

- Candace Young

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“I am a survivor of a brain injury. And now I'm an active provider to Medicaid individuals. My accident was 26 years ago. It changed my life...**What I've been hearing [about Medicaid cuts] is just unfathomable...The cuts that would happen could cause these people anguish. It would be unbelievable for them.**”

- Kevin Wadsworth



“My daughter qualifies for Medicaid and the services it provides her due to her being born with this rare syndrome, CHARGE syndrome. Medicaid allows her to have a home health care nurse that goes to school with her and makes sure she's safe medically and to ensure she receives her food because she is tube fed...**When you have children like my daughter, not all private insurance is going to pay for intervention services.** Some will pay for several sessions a year, or not at all. My primary insurance does not cover home health care...**Medicaid is where it comes in and covers the rest of that for our children or for our parents who need things.** I just want you to remember that private insurance does not cover all these things.”

- Lisa Collette



# DISTRICT 3

SHAWNEE | APRIL 24, 2025



“ Medicaid isn’t just a program, it’s a lifeline. It’s the reason I’m able to live in my own home, make my own choices, and contribute to the community. Living with autism comes with its unique challenges...Medicaid helps fill those gaps...**Medicaid is not charity; it’s a promise. A promise that our society values all of its members, including people with disabilities.**

- Amelia Zang-Carta ”



“Medicaid is a critical safety net for people with disabilities; people like my son, Danny. Medicaid ensures that millions of disabled people receive the care where they need it, which is in their own homes and in their own communities. Medicaid ensures that millions of children survive and thrive. **Danny’s life is not a tragedy. The tragedy is living with a government that doesn’t recognize the value of his life.** I would change nothing about my son, but I would change everything for him.”

- Laura Robeson



“ Unfortunately, Kansas already faces a long waitlist for [Home and Community-Based] Services - currently nine years. **Any reduction in Medicaid funding would further delay access, jeopardize service quality, and destabilize the already strained provider network. Please do not balance the budget at the expense of individuals with disabilities.**

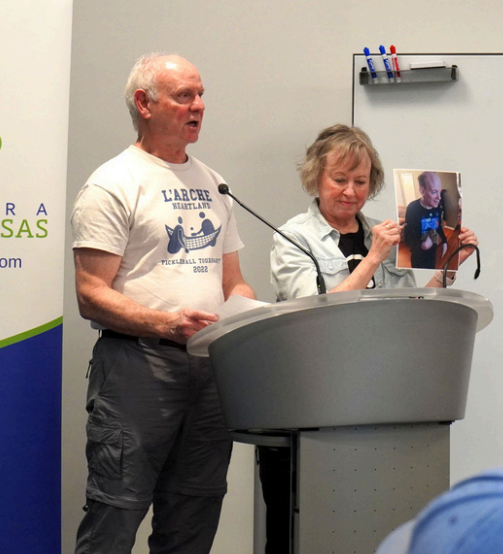
- Marilyn Hammond ”



“ I’m a perinatologist, so I see high-risk pregnancies in my practice...If they make it harder for people to be eligible for Medicaid, and if they reduce provider payment, it’s going to be really hard for these rural maternity centers to actually stay open. And that’s a really big deal because right now in rural Kansas, we don’t have enough maternity centers. And these patients don’t have anywhere to go when they have medical emergencies.

- Dr. Angela Martin ”





This is a picture of our son, Brian. Brian is 49 years old. He has multiple congenital disabilities stemming from genetic deletions...He cannot add or subtract or make change. So he cannot work, cannot support himself. Medicaid helps pay for his medical expenses: doctors, dentists, hospital stays, etc...It pays for his HCBS, for his residential services...**Otherwise these disabled adults would be homebound with parents who are aging themselves and cannot necessarily provide the level of care needed.**

- Mark & Patty Hink



"I just want you to imagine for a second feeling very down. You can't get out of bed. You can't eat. You don't feel like you are important to anyone. You don't know if you want to live anymore. You get the courage one day to call and ask for help. And you are told, **'We would love to see you. We can get you in in three months.'** That's what Medicaid cuts can do to the mental health system."

- Christine Swenson



"Medicaid actually allows us to save the state of Kansas millions of dollars because those folks aren't ending up prematurely or unnecessarily in long-term care facilities...It means that our seniors, veterans, grandparents may have nowhere to turn for those benefits. **It's a values issue. Do we value the dignity of our seniors here in Kansas and in our country?"**

- Commissioner Jeneé Hanzlick



"When he was born in the early 1960s, the doctors told my parents that they should put [my brother] in an institution. The doctor also said [he] would not live long because he was born with Down syndrome...He was one of the first cohorts that could go to a group home...and live fully in the community, all supported by Medicaid...**This year he celebrated his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. His friends all made him a cake and they had pizza. Do not cut Medicaid, please.**"

- Commissioner Becky Fast



"I was a rural family doctor and delivered babies and provided comprehensive medical care for about 10 years in Burlington, Kansas. Sixty percent of our practice was Medicare and Medicaid. If we had cuts, the hospital wouldn't be there...The hospitals in Kansas are going to start closing even if we keep things where they are...**We need to get the politics out of all this nonsense and give the health care providers, the social workers, the law enforcement the tools they need to provide compassionate care.**"

- Dr. Michael Kennedy

# DISTRICT 4

WICHITA | APRIL 22, 2025



“My mom lives with a disease called Pompe disease. It’s a rare form of muscular dystrophy. Essentially it attacks her muscles, and that includes her breathing. So she’s bed bound, she breathes on a ventilator, and she relies on care...I’m part of a lot of online forums for families who are impacted by muscular dystrophy, and I just have to say **right now folks are full of panic...People are terrified, worried that they’ll lose access to life-sustaining treatments, medical equipment, or even basic needs like food.**”

- Haley Kottler



“I wish the people in Washington, D.C., instead of sitting behind the desk writing the laws and saying, ‘We’re going to make these cuts’, **why don’t you try being in our shoes to see how our lives would go and then you would have a better understanding of it...These Medicaid cuts would hurt us in a major way,** like not being able to get out of our homes, not being able to go shopping, not being able to have staff that come in and take care of you.

- Rick Macias



We have representatives that say that the agricultural business is vital to the state of Kansas. **I cannot comprehend why our elected officials would even consider doing something that undermines the agricultural business and the ability for farm families to stay on those generational farms.** You take the services, medical services, social support services...away, what’s already diminishing will soon be gone.

- Ron Chronister



Recently I was diagnosed with a chronic, incurable illness...We have to see our doctor once a month, minimum. We have to have lab work done. Most of us take one pill a day...**So this is important for your friends, for your neighbors.**

- Taylor Williams







“The way our system is set up is that people can have a car accident or a stroke or some type of traumatic event to that brain, and private insurance only covers and gives them access to therapies for six months...**[With Medicaid], they now have access to therapies - physical, occupational, speech therapy, and then they also have cognitive, behavioral, and life skill therapies - for up to four years. It’s life changing.**”

- Christine Bacci



“I started a company where we would go out to senior living communities and provide talk therapy, counseling...They are extremely isolated, they are very lonely, they are dealing with a lot of grief and now they are scared. **They are terrified about Medicaid cuts...I do believe that the proposed Medicaid cuts in Kansas would have a catastrophic impact on the geriatric population.**”

- Lisa Harrison

“Two years ago I suffered an ectopic pregnancy and I had to have a life-saving surgery...**And they’re actually talking right now in legislation about shortening the 12-month post-pregnancy availability of coverage...**But that was a vital part of keeping my physical and mental health so I could be there for my other children.”

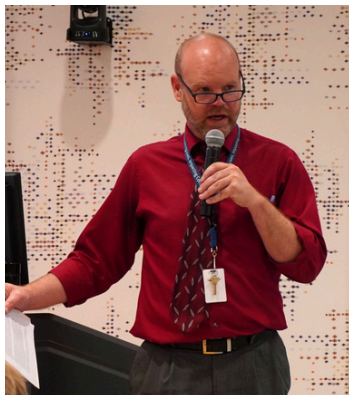
- Melissa Dodge



**“Veterans are a group that’s already 50% more likely to experience homelessness and which are taking their lives at a rate of 18 veterans every single day. That’s stoppable.**

The proposed Medicaid cuts obviously would come at an unfathomable cost, both financial and in terms of human life.”

- Eric Litwiller

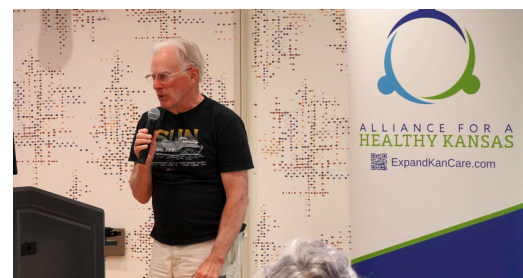


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I wish that people would understand that **if we don’t take care of kids today, they are going to become adolescents and adults with even more significant problems** that are going to end up in ERs and much more expensive situations than if we just take care of them now.

- Sarah Amador

”



“I have a granddaughter that’s handicapped...It doesn’t affect just the person with a handicap. It affects everybody around them. **Your whole life has changed. My whole life has been changed.**”

- Norman Scott



# ONGOING DEMAND FOR MEDICAID EXPANSION

**“Most people who fall in the Medicaid gap in Kansas are hardworking folks. They’re working two jobs, may have kids, but neither job pays enough to afford a Blue Cross policy. So they go without insurance. And again, if you’re not covered, if you’re not seeing the doctor.**

**Sooner or later you’re going to get sick or have a catastrophe that doesn’t get treated and you’re permanently out of the workforce.**

There’s this perception that people on Medicaid are deadbeats. That is just so far from the truth.”

- Dr. Trent Davis

**“We are one of the few states that has not expanded Medicaid. The gap between when you qualify for CHIP and when you no longer qualify for CHIP, and then what you pay on Healthcare.gov, is a huge difference.**

**That money matters.”**

- Sarah Amador

**“I see a lot of folks that end up in the Medicaid gap, and it’s just really heartbreaking because they’re not dirt poor, they’re not lazy. They have jobs, they make too much money because they make over \$12,000 and yet they can’t afford health care.**

**They don’t get the tax credit in Marketplace plans, so they have absolutely no insurance.”**

- Tracy Myers

**“Fourteen percent of Kansans get Medicaid. Another 8% if we expand Medicaid in the state of Kansas. That’s about 150,000 people. They have no insurance right now...Almost 16,000 Sedgwick county residents. That would make a little over 5,000 jobs in Sedgwick county.”**

- Leroy Burton

**“The people that are in the care of the Johnson County Sheriff’s Office are important as well...Those people have needs just like anyone else...I don’t think people realize it costs the county about \$8.5 million a year to make sure they have the medical care they deserve and need...Imagine if we could get some Medicaid expansion to take care of some of those people that are more than likely to have Medicaid but don’t have it because of the system...I can guarantee you it would make a dent in that \$8.5 million we pay every year.”**

- Sheriff Byron Roberson

**“I asked [my legislator] a question: Why aren’t we expanding Medicaid? How come you’re voting against it? ‘Can’t afford it...She could go to the hospital, they have to see her there. They can just go to the emergency room’...He couldn’t think of anything else to tell me. You know, he had no answer.”**

- Theresa Weaver

# About Us

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The Alliance for a Healthy Kansas is a statewide 501(c)(3) non-partisan, non-profit organization focused on increasing access to affordable health care, promoting health justice for all Kansans, and decreasing medical debt. We work with other organizations to advocate for policies to improve health for Kansans.

## Alliance for a Healthy Kansas

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