

Message from the President and CEO

March 7, 2013

Dear Nonprofit Partners:

Health care issues remain at the forefront of discussions in Kansas and Missouri this year. With the majority of provisions of the Affordable Care Act upheld, and legislatures halfway through their sessions in Kansas and Missouri, it's a good time to talk about the remaining health policy opportunities before us.

Participation in one of the most significant optional provisions, expansion of state Medicaid programs, is the topic of the moment, and rightly so. I have written before about the REACH Foundation's support for Medicaid expansion in both states. Our Board of Directors sees this as one of the most important opportunities in our lifetimes to cover hundreds of thousands of low income and uninsured people in the two states we serve. Medicaid eligibility levels in Kansas and Missouri are remarkably low relative to the rest of the nation. It is nearly impossible for very low income, uninsured, childless adults in either state to qualify for Medicaid.



While a number of governors have stated their intentions to expand state Medicaid programs, others haven't publicly shared their plans. In Missouri, Gov. Jay Nixon has announced his support for expansion of Medicaid, calling it an economic decision. Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback hasn't communicated his position yet, but his administration continues to study the issue.

In both states, there is a lot of discussion among lawmakers, consumer advocates, business organizations, hospital and medical associations and others. While lawmakers in both states are generally opposed, hospital associations and a number of business chamber groups have voiced their support. We believe the more voices that join this chorus the more our elected officials will begin to understand the very real impact of Medicaid expansion on their own constituents and hometowns. Here's our view in a nutshell:

Medicaid expansion is a sound investment for our states:

A Healthy Population = A Healthy Workforce = A Healthy State Economy

Medicaid expansion will create an avenue for thousands of low-income, working people in Kansas and Missouri to obtain health care coverage and access to timely, less costly preventative care, keeping them at work and out of the emergency rooms of their local hospitals. By leveraging available federal support, Medicaid expansion will bring millions of

dollars in federal funding to each state that will support health services, fuel workforce development and contribute to the states' economies.

There are several new reports from Kansas and Missouri health policy and health care organizations that detail the household and statewide economic benefits of expanding health care coverage. The benefits aren't just to children and adults; hospitals, health care workers, rural communities and employers all stand to benefit from this investment in people's health.

Talking about health care in public isn't easy. The issues are complex; there is frequent disagreement about the facts; and the topic can be polarizing for many. However, it is important that we continue to look for ways to talk with people about health care given its enormous impact on our communities. The REACH Foundation's Board of Directors adopted a set of health policy priorities for 2013. We are reaching out to elected leaders in our two states to share our perspectives on Medicaid expansion and other health issues. We are also funding a number of health advocacy and health consumer outreach projects to ensure people are educated on the issues and can speak effectively about the need.

The foundation's other health policy interests include addressing oral health workforce gaps in Kansas and Missouri; state support for implementation of the medical home, or health home, model of patient care; and legislative and consumer oversight of KanCare, Kansas' redesigned Medicaid program.

We invite you to read our [2013 policy priorities](#) and share with us what you are doing to advocate for the health of populations you serve. And please, let us know how we can help you advance your mission where our shared values and interests intersect.

Brenda R. Sharpe, President and CEO

Additional Reading

[Economic and Employment Effects of Expanding KanCare in Kansas](#)

Analysis of the economic impact of a Medicaid expansion, prepared by Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI) and the George Washington University (GW) for the Kansas Hospital Association. February 2013.

What Medicaid Covers

In Kansas, a typical family of four qualifies for Medicaid if its income is less than \$7,500 per year – about 32 percent of the federal poverty level. The program does not provide coverage to adults without children unless they have a disability.

In Missouri, Medicaid eligibility is limited for low-income parents to those earning less than 19 percent of the federal poverty level, or approximately \$4,500 per year for a family of four.

[ACA Medicaid Expansion: Enrollment and Cost Estimates for Kansas Policymakers](#)

Kansas Health Institute Issue Brief, December 2012.

[The Economic Impacts of Medicaid Expansion on Missouri](#)

Prepared by the University of Missouri School of Medicine Department of Health Management and Informatics, and Dobson DaVanzo & Associates, LLC, Vienna VA, for the Missouri Hospital Association and the Missouri Foundation for Health, November 2012.

[The Missouri Medicaid Expansion: Good for All Missourians](#)

Prepared by Dr. Timothy McBride, Washington University; Sidney Watson, J.D., Saint Louis University School of Law; Amy Blouin, Missouri Budget Project, January 2013.

[5 Key Questions about Medicaid and Its Role in State/Federal Budgets and Health Reform](#)

Medicaid overview published by the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, May 2012.

[Tracking Medicaid Expansion Decisions](#)

Snapshot of 50 states and District of Columbia on Medicaid expansion prepared by statereform, an online network on health reform implementation, a project of the [National Academy for State Health Policy](#).

[2013 HHS Poverty Guidelines](#)

Learn more about the REACH Healthcare Foundation
www.reachhealth.org