



# HEALTH POLICY PRIORITIES

## 2018 KANSAS POLICY AGENDA

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### Close the Health Coverage Gap

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The REACH Foundation supports expansion of KanCare, the state's Medicaid program, to close the health coverage gap that affects thousands of low-income, working adults and families in Kansas.

- State Medicaid rules have kept nearly 150,000 Kansans in the coverage gap – without coverage options and unable to secure subsidies through the health insurance marketplace.
- To date, Kansas has forfeited more than \$2.1 billion in Medicaid matching federal resources – tax dollars already paid for by Kansans that would fuel the state's economy and provide financial assistance to hospitals and health and mental health systems that care for individuals who are unable to pay.
- Despite efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act, Congress has not been able to come to agreement on health reform. The Governor and Legislature should ensure Kansans can access the same resources currently available in 31 other states.

### Expand the Oral Health Workforce

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The REACH Foundation supports the dental therapist model as a practical and proven solution for improving access to dental care for underserved people.

- Kansas' dental workforce is unable to meet the demand for oral health care, particularly among children, seniors and other vulnerable populations. Access to care increases when dentists are authorized to hire mid-level providers, particularly in the safety net health care system and in rural areas.
- More than a dozen states with similar challenges have passed or are pursuing legislation to allow dentists to hire dental therapists as a cost-effective model to address needs in their communities. Dentistry is the only health profession that has not embraced use of mid-level providers.
- Dental therapy is an approved practice, with accreditation standards set by the Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA), which accredits all U.S. education programs for dentists and hygienists.

### Protect and Enact Fiscal Policies That Help Kansans Thrive

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The REACH Foundation urges elected leaders to continue working to establish budget and tax policies that will protect core services and stabilize the state's financial outlook.

- Kansas lawmakers took an important step in 2017 toward reversing tax policies that resulted in significant revenue losses and cuts to critical public services, including mental health, public health and prevention, children and family services, corrections and public safety. While this step has Kansas headed in a more positive direction, much work remains to be done to stabilize the budget.
- The 2018 Legislature should build upon the progress made and restore adequate funding and administrative support and increase oversight for essential safety net services that allow Kansas families and communities to thrive.