



Tools for Engaging Candidates: Attending Candidate Forums

Over the next several months, it is critical that Kansans take an active role in informing candidates and elected legislators about the need and benefits of expanding KanCare. Alliance for a Healthy Kansas encourages Alliance members and Kansans to actively engage legislative candidates on Kansas' health insurance coverage gap and to discuss the importance of expanding KanCare.

We are in the midst of election season. There are candidate forums happening throughout the state.

Candidate forums provide a great opportunity to learn about candidate positions on key issues and an opportunity to engage aspiring policymakers on the important topic of expanding KanCare.

We know asking questions at a candidate forum may not be natural for everyone. To make the process easier, we have drafted the following sample questions to ask candidates for office at forums or in person.

Background for questioner: Kansas has forfeited more than \$1.4 billion as a result of the decision not to expand KanCare. Expanding KanCare will bring hundreds of millions of your federal tax dollars back to Kansas and create jobs, boost our economy, protect hospitals and improve the health of Kansans. Evidence from states that closed the coverage gap shows that it generates budget savings and new revenue.

Sample Question: Do you support expanding KanCare?

Background for questioner: KanCare is not available to 150,000 hardworking Kansans who earn too much to qualify for KanCare but too little to be eligible to get financial help to buy private insurance. These are hard working men and women who are stuck with few options for affordable health coverage and are delaying health care until their situations become dire and costly.

Sample Question: Do you believe that Kansas needs to reduce our dependence on emergency rooms, incentivize healthy behaviors and create accountability in our health care system? If yes, how do we achieve this?

Background for questioner: Last year, a hospital in Independence closed due in part to the failure to expand KanCare. This summer, St. Francis in Topeka cited the lack of KanCare expansion as a reason the hospital system is for sale. Via Christi in Wichita, has laid off employees to deal with losses attributed to failure to expand KanCare. Today, 31 hospitals in the state are deemed at risk. Expanding KanCare would benefit our hospitals by ensuring they get reimbursed for care they are providing and protect the communities where they are located.

Sample Question: Do you support protecting hospitals and ensuring Kansans have access to care where they live?

Background for questioner: If Kansas expands KanCare, the state will generate hundreds of millions of dollars in new economic activity, create thousands of jobs and eliminate inefficient and costly state and county indigent care programs.

Sample Question: Do you support bringing home our federal tax dollars to invest in a Kansas solution that closes the coverage gap and creates a more efficient and cost-effective health system?

If not, how do you propose to provide comprehensive, affordable and accessible health insurance to low-income individuals?

Background for questioner: In the news I have seen a lot of stories about Kansans who are needlessly suffering and dying because they do not have access to affordable specialty care, prescription coverage or mental health care. As a candidate, how do you respond to families who have lost a loved one because the individual fell in the coverage gap and did not have access to desperately needed health care?

Sample Question: How do I explain to my neighbors living in the coverage gap why a full solution has not yet passed the Legislature?

Background for questioner: 31% of the uninsured Kansans in the coverage gap have had substance use disorder or mental illness in the past year. Expanding KanCare will help these Kansans gain access to coverage that enables them to get treatment in their community rather than in a costlier setting or ending up in jail. Providing health coverage will improve the quality of life for individuals, treating behavioral health conditions has also been shown to decrease state costs.

Sample Question: Would you support expanding KanCare as a way to reduce use of Kansas' criminal justice system and lower costs at the same time as improving access to behavioral services for tens of thousands of Kansans?