



# Health Reform Resource Project:

funded by Kansas Grantmakers in Health

**Testimony for the KanCare Informational Forum  
Presented to Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)  
and Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS):  
By Sheldon Weisgrau  
May 24, 2016**

**KanCare is Dysfunctional: Expansion is Needed to Fix the Program and  
Ensure that Adequate Resources are Available**

Secretary Mosier and Interim Secretary Keck:

I am Sheldon Weisgrau, director of the Health Reform Resource Project, a foundation-funded initiative to ensure that the consumer voice is represented in the health policy debate in Kansas. The Health Reform Resource Project provides education and assistance to Kansans to help them better understand health care, health reform, and the changing health system. Over the last five years, I have conducted extensive analysis and traveled throughout the state talking to KanCare beneficiaries, health care providers, community groups, business owners, and others about KanCare and health care in Kansas.

When Governor Brownback and Lt. Governor Colyer proposed KanCare, they recognized that it would be a program important to all Kansans. The goal of KanCare was to “implement reforms in the current Medicaid program to improve outcomes and reduce costs.” The administration promised to work towards:

- Integrated, whole-person care;
- Preserving or creating a path to independence; and
- Alternative access models and an emphasis on home and community based services.

Unfortunately, this vision for KanCare has fallen woefully short. The program faces administrative and funding challenges. Many of these challenges could be addressed by expanding KanCare.

The KanCare enrollment system is plagued by backlogs, delays, poor customer service, and other hurdles that seem to be designed to discourage participation. Enrollment problems are so pervasive that the Topeka Capitol-Journal ran an extensive expose of the issue just a few

1129 S. Kansas Avenue, Suite B  
Topeka, KS 66612  
Phone: (785) 408-8008  
Fax: (785) 233-8403  
Email: [HealthReformResource@gmail.com](mailto:HealthReformResource@gmail.com)



## Health Reform Resource Project:

funded by Kansas Grantmakers in Health

days ago, on May 21: [Few paper applications, long call wait times seen as barriers to applying for Medicaid in Kansas](#). You'll hear many others today go into depth about the issues faced by applicants and beneficiaries, so I'll leave it to them to fill in the details.

There is little openness or transparency in KanCare. Data are largely unavailable and the state is often not responsive to requests for information. KanCare was implemented with the promise of enhanced quality and outcomes and reduced costs. We are now three years into the program and the public has no idea if these goals have been met.

The budget cuts recently announced by the Governor only promise to further hamper access to the program and the health care services that low-income, disabled, and elderly Kansans need.

KanCare is in desperate need of resources to solve the administrative problems that plague it. For this reason, we should not entertain renewal of the program without having a full and open discussion about KanCare expansion. This is a discussion that the people of Kansas want, but has been resisted by the Administration and the legislature. Now is the time.

KanCare expansion will be almost entirely funded by the federal government. It will bring billions of dollars to the state that will allow us to finally get KanCare right. Expansion in Kansas can be expected to generate jobs, revenue, and budget savings, as it has in other states. It will help make providers that have been hurt by administrative dysfunction whole again. It is a sound investment in Kansas and for Kansans.

It seems counterintuitive to suggest expanding a program that is currently not operating effectively or adequately serving the needs of many of its constituents. But expansion is exactly what is needed. A well designed expansion plan will help bring into focus the problems of the current system. We can identify effective solutions to better serve both existing KanCare beneficiaries and Kansans who will finally have access to coverage and health care through an expanded program. For KanCare, now is the time to fix it, fund it, and expand it.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

1129 S. Kansas Avenue, Suite B  
Topeka, KS 66612  
Phone: (785) 408-8008  
Fax: (785) 233-8403  
Email: [HealthReformResource@gmail.com](mailto:HealthReformResource@gmail.com)