



**An independent voice for
those served by KanCare.**

Oct. 11, 2023

Sen. Gossage and members of the KanCare Oversight Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the KanCare Advocates Network (KAN). KAN is a coalition of more than 50 organizations who advocate on behalf of and serve the 400,000 Kansans who depend upon the Kansas Medicaid program, KanCare, and its seven Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver programs for their health care and long-term supports and services.

Since the beginning of KanCare, KAN has supported policies and programs that support home and community based services across all waivers. Such services can only be grown and maintained by sustainable funding that keeps pace with the costs to provide them. The increased funding approved by the 2023 Legislature was much appreciated by providers, advocates and Kansans served by KanCare. The increases in provider reimbursement rates and additional funding for an array of social services programs are already improving lives of thousands of Kansans who depend on KanCare and the providers of their services.

However, the current policy of funding waivers separately creates inconsistencies and a patchwork approach to addressing provider rates across all waivers. An investment in any of the waivers is always appreciated but increasing rates for providers of only one waiver creates an unhealthy imbalance across the others. Inequity makes it difficult for providers of services under other waivers to recruit and retain staff when the employee pool and job functions are basically the same, but the pay is markedly less. Understandably, employees will choose the higher paying job, leaving the other populations underserved and understaffed. **We ask the committee to recommend the development of a long-range plan to address the imbalance among rates and waiver services. The goal of such a process would be to bring rate parity across all HCBS waivers.**

KAN and the Big Tent Coalition often collaborate and many of our members/partners participate in both organizations. **KAN supports the Big Tent's request to reduce the waiting lists for the Physically Disabled and the Intellectual/Developmentally Disabled by 20%.** Persons wait years, often decades, for the services they need and are eligible for. Meeting this goal will require collaboration and innovation to build network capacity and a thorough plan to overcome the obstacles preventing the elimination of the waiting list. The Big Tent's

proposal begins that process.

KAN also supports

- KABC's request to **re-establish case management services to persons served on the Frail Elderly, Physically Disabled and the Brain Injury waivers**. KanCare members on these three waivers lost case management during the program's early days. Reestablishing case management services would support thousands of Kansans in receiving the services they need in the setting of their choice – at home.
- The **Alzheimer's Association for \$600,000 to fund a respite program for families caring for persons diagnosed with dementia**. Such a program, administered through the Kansas Area Agencies on Aging, will ease the burdens, enhance the quality of life of caregivers and those diagnosed with dementia and reduce the number of persons who may need institutional care prematurely.
- **SACK's request to increase its annual funding**. Since it began 20+ years ago, SACK has doubled its number of full time employees and more than doubled its staff of part-time employees. Most importantly, additional funding will allow this organization to continue to multiply its outreach and advocacy efforts by providing a strong voice for persons with disabilities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and respectfully ask that you support our requests and those of our partners.

Sean Gatewood
Barb Conant
KanCare Advocates Network