



To: Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee
From: Sonja Bachus, CEO, Community Care Network of Kansas
RE: SB 45
February 13, 2023

Chair Beverly Gossage and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity for Community Care Network of Kansas to submit written testimony in support of SB 45, correcting a technical error in Kansas statutes pertaining to Kansas Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). I am Sonja Bachus, Chief Executive Officer of Community Care. We are a statewide association serving 32 health centers and community-based clinics across Kansas. Clinics in this network serve anyone, with a specialty of providing care to the most vulnerable and underserved Kansans. In 2021, our network provided more than 82,000 Kansas children with whole-person care including medical, dental, mental health, substance use disorder, pharmacy, and enabling services to meet transportation and other social and economic needs.

Community Care supports SB 45. The changes this bill makes are largely technical in nature, correcting an error made in 2008 that progressively eroded the number of children eligible for CHIP each year. Kansas is the only state with language referencing a specific year for federal poverty level (FPL) for CHIP. Other programs referenced in Kansas statute do not tie the FPL to a specific year. This statute is the exception – and it needs fixed. Since the federal government adjusts the poverty guidelines annually as the cost of living increases, holding income limits steady at the 2008 FPL has the effect of annually reducing CHIP eligibility relative to the poverty level. Without the proviso passed by the Legislature in 2022, the effective income limit for 2023 would be only 177 percent of the current FPL, making thousands of children whose families earn between 177 and 250 percent of FPL ineligible for CHIP. As costs continue to rise, this eligibility limit will get progressively lower, and the number of children unfairly denied eligibility will continue to grow.

Due to this outdated statute, many Kansas families miss out on CHIP coverage for their kids. This not only puts a strain on families, it also forces state-funded health clinics in the Community Care Network to stretch scarce resources. These clinics provide care regardless of their patients’ ability to pay. Increasing the number of families without health coverage for their children means that clinics increase the amount of uncompensated care they provide. Correcting this error allows clinics to utilize their resources to serve more patients and expand the services provided to communities. This bill is good for Kansas children, good for Kansas families, and good for Kansas.

Thank you for your consideration.