



Feb. 23, 2021

Rep. Carpenter and members of the House Social Services Budget Committee: thank you for the opportunity to offer written neutral testimony on HB 2249.

Kansas Advocates for Better Care (KABC) has been among the many advocates who have supported increasing the Protected Income Level (PIL) to the maximum allowed under federal regulations. We have also supported indexing the amount of monthly income recipients of Home and Community Based Services and participants of the Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) are allowed to keep so that as Social Security benefits increase, so does the PIL.

While we support the indexed provision within HB 2249, we continue to believe that these Kansans deserve to keep the full amount of their income and their benefits.

We ask this committee to support our collective efforts to eliminate the client obligation for most persons receiving services under the seven Home and Community Based Services waivers and those served through the PACE program by amending this bill to 300% of federal Supplemental Security Income level.

Increasing the amount of “protected income” that older adults can keep may be the difference between living at home and living in a nursing home. Older adults needing services covered by the Frail Elderly waiver and those considering the PACE option will benefit from a Protected Income Level (PIL) increase that is tied to Social Security benefits.

The current monthly PIL of \$1,177 too often forces older adults and persons with disabilities to choose between safe, affordable, accessible housing over food and transportation. They must prioritize paying utility bills over needed medications.

Housing costs are likely to consume much of their monthly income limit. Throughout Kansas, in rural and urban settings alike, low-income housing options are limited. Even those older adults who own their homes struggle to pay property taxes, insurance, and maintenance on \$1,177 month.

Their options are limited when they are no longer able to manage the costs of living at home. A nursing home may be their only option. With inadequate income, older adults, many of whom do not have nearby family or a broad network of support, may have few options other than institutional care. At an annual average cost of \$58,000 to \$77,000 institutional settings in Kansas are significantly more expensive than living at home; nor do they support an individual’s choice to live at home, in a less restrictive setting.

The costs associated with ending client obligations for most waiver recipients and PACE participants will be quickly offset by diverting and/or delaying nursing home placement of a few hundred Kansans and streamlining a burdensome and confusing system. Please help older adults and persons with disabilities by amending HB 2249 to 300% of SSI and ending client obligation under the KanCare waivers and the PACE program.

Margaret Farley, Executive Director - On behalf of Board of Directors and Members

KABC is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to improve the quality of long-term care for older adults in nursing and assisted facilities and in-home.