

December 16, 2021

Dear Senators Moran and Marshall,

As organizations that represent thousands of Kansans, we are writing to you to urge you to support the Build Back Better Act. Our organizations are dedicated to improving the health of Kansans and working to ensure mothers and children have the best start in life.

In Kansas, nearly 1 in 10 adults (9.1%) is uninsured and more than 1 in 20 (5.8%) children lacks health coverage.¹ As a result of a high uninsured rate, too many Kansas women and children are not getting the healthiest start to life, Kansans are not accessing health care needed to support their return to the workforce, and the cost of health care is too high for too many Kansans.

The Build Back Better Act makes critical investments in making health care more affordable for all Kansans, which will support the health of all Kansans, especially mothers and children. Additionally, these provisions will address longstanding health inequities within the state. We ask that you support the plan because it:

- **Closes the coverage gap.** The provision to permanently close the coverage gap in the states that have not expanded Medicaid will benefit more than 100,000 Kansans who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but too little to qualify for subsidies for coverage through the marketplace. Kansas is one of only 12 states that has not expanded Medicaid. A Kansas family of three with an annual income of \$8,345 makes too much to be covered by Medicaid, and too little to receive marketplace subsidies.² According to the Alliance for a Healthy Kansas, more than two-thirds of adults eligible for insurance through Medicaid expansion work or are in working families, and most are employed in industries less likely to offer affordable health insurance, such as service, construction, and retail.³
- **Extends postpartum coverage.** The provision to permanently extend postpartum coverage to 12 months will ensure mothers maintain health coverage at a crucial time. Without the extension, each year approximately 9,000 Kansas mothers will lose coverage a mere 60 days postpartum once the public health emergency expires. Nearly 40% of Kansas births are covered by Medicaid.⁴ Nearly one-quarter of Kansas pregnancy-related deaths occur between 43 days and one year after pregnancy.⁵ Children will benefit as well—parental enrollment in Medicaid is associated with a 29% higher probability that a child will receive an annual well-child visit.⁶ Extending postpartum coverage will save lives and lead to healthier starts for mothers and children.

¹ Kansas Health Institute, *Health Insurance in Kansas: Annual Insurance Update 2021*, accessed December 3, 2021, [https://www.khi.org/assets/uploads/news/15012/annual_insurance_update_2021_\(december_2021\)_2.pdf](https://www.khi.org/assets/uploads/news/15012/annual_insurance_update_2021_(december_2021)_2.pdf).

² "Medicaid Income Eligibility Limits for Adults as a Percent of the Federal Poverty Level," Kaiser Family Foundation, accessed December 3, 2021, <https://www.kff.org/health-reform/state-indicator/medicaid-income-eligibility-limits-for-adults-as-a-percent-of-the-federal-poverty-level/>.

³ Alliance for a Healthy Kansas, *KanCare Expansion: Just the Facts* (February 2020), accessed December 3, 2021, <https://expandkancare.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Working-Families-Feb-2020.pdf>.

⁴ "Births Financed by Medicaid," Kaiser Family Foundation, October 2019, accessed December 3, 2021, <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator/births-financed-by-medicaid/>.

⁵ Kansas Maternal Mortality Review Committee, *Kansas Maternal Mortality Report 2016-2018: Including Severe Maternal Morbidity, 2016-2019* (Topeka, 2020).

⁶ Maya Venkataramani, Craig Evan Pollack, and Eric T. Roberts, "Spillover Effects of Adult Medicaid Expansions on Children's Use of Preventive Services," Abstract, *PubMed.gov*. November 13, 2017, doi: 10.1542/peds.2017-0953.

- **Advances birth equity.** The Build Back Better Act contains all 12 bills originally included in the Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act. The Omnibus addresses maternal health equity through growing and diversifying the perinatal workforce, by investing in organizations focused on promoting maternal health equity, and by addressing social determinants of maternal health, among others.⁷ The maternal health crisis highlights longstanding racial disparities. In Kansas, non-white minority women are nearly twice as likely to die within a year of pregnancy as non-Hispanic white women.⁸
- **Makes the Children’s Health Improvement Program (CHIP) permanent.** The provision to make federal CHIP funding permanent would increase stability in children’s health coverage by ensuring that states have the federal funding needed to maintain and expand their programs. Currently, the program is funded through September 30, 2027. The bill would also permanently extend the Medicaid and CHIP stability provision for children, meaning that states cannot make it more difficult for eligible children to enroll.⁹
- **Makes health coverage more affordable.** The provision to extend Marketplace subsidies through the end of 2025 will help the nearly 90,000 Kansans who received additional federal dollars this year to reduce their health insurance premiums and deductibles. This will leave more of their monthly budget to spend on housing, food, and other necessities.¹⁰
- **Streamlines access to Medicaid and CHIP through 12 months continuous coverage and use of express lane eligibility.** The plan reduces burdens on families by using available information from other benefit programs to establish eligibility for Medicaid and CHIP. The plan also ensures all children and youth enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP can stay enrolled for 12 continuous months, which will reduce the risk that children experience gaps in coverage or lose it altogether. Nationally, 1 in 10 kids experiences a period without coverage during the year, and that number rises to more than 1 in 8 kids in families below 250% of the federal poverty level.¹¹

These provisions in the Build Back Better Act will create more affordable coverage for Kansans. When all Kansans can afford health coverage, we all benefit. Hospitals will be on stronger financial ground—especially those in rural areas where proximity to care can save lives. More insured Kansans will lead to less uncompensated care and reduced Medicaid costs for our state. Kansans will be healthier and able to return to work. Most importantly, mothers and children will have the health care needed to have the strongest start to life, which in the long run will improve health and reduce costs.

⁷ Office of Representative Lauren Underwood, “Underwood’s ‘Omnibus’ Passes House in Build Back Better Act; Makes Largest Investment to Advance Birth Equity in American History,” news release, November 19, 2021, <https://underwood.house.gov/media/press-releases/underwood-s-momnibus-passes-house-build-back-better-act-makes-largest>.

⁸ Kansas Maternal Mortality Review Committee, *Kansas Maternal Mortality Report 2016-2018: Including Severe Maternal Morbidity, 2016-2019* (Topeka, 2020).

⁹ Edwin Park, “Build Back Better Reconciliation Bill Would Take Big Strides in Expanding Health Coverage and Access for Children and Families,” *Say Ahhh!* (blog), Georgetown University Health Policy Institute, October 29, 2021, <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2021/10/29/build-back-better-reconciliation-bill-would-make-big-strides-in-expanding-coverage-and-access-for-children-and-families>.

¹⁰ Suzanne Wikle, “Kansans Will Benefit from Health Provisions In Build Back Better Legislation,” Opinion, *Kansas Reflector*, November 30, 2021, <https://kansasreflector.com/2021/11/30/kansans-will-benefit-from-health-provisions-in-build-back-better-legislation>.

¹¹ Joan Alker and Aubrianna Osorio, “Why is Medicaid/CHIP Continuous Eligibility So Important for Kids?” *Say Ahhh!* (blog), Georgetown University Health Policy Institute, October 8, 2021, <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2021/10/08/why-is-medicaid-chip-continuous-eligibility-so-important-for-kids>.

We urge you to support these provisions in the Build Back Better Act that will lead to healthier kids, healthier mothers, and healthier Kansans. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Child Advocacy and Parenting Services
CKF Addiction Treatment
Community Care Network of Kansas
Community Health Council of Wyandotte County
Cradle Kansas City
D&R Tender Loving Care Home Health Services
Ellsworth County Medical Center
Faith Voices for Medicaid Expansion
Flint Hills Wellness Coalition
International Pain Foundation
KanCare Advocates Network
Kansas Academy of Family Physicians
Kansas Action for Children
Kansas Appleseed
Kansas Birth Equity Network
Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition
Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Kansas Head Start Association
Kansas Health Foundation
Kansas Interfaith Action
Kansas Public Health Association
KL Connections
League of Women Voters of Kansas
Mainstream Coalition
Martin Luther King, Jr. Child Development Center
MORE2
NEK-CAP, Inc
New Hope and Love Community Church
Nurture KC
Oral Health Kansas, Inc.
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation
The Neighboring Movement
Therapy Services LLC
United Methodist Health Ministry Fund
Wichita Medical Research and Education Foundation
Women for Kansas