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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Health Foundations invest \$1.83 million
in equity, education and health**

Four Kansas nonprofit organizations have been selected as grant recipients of a new initiative to increase equity in school readiness and educational outcomes created by the Kansas Health Foundation (KHF) and the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund (Health Fund). Recipients include Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition, Metro Organization for Racial and Economic Equity, Storytime Village and Thrive Allen County.

The Kansas Advocates for Equity, Education and Health (KAEEH) initiative focuses on the systems impacting young children's health, early learning and high-quality education to shift those in ways that create more opportunities for educational success and positive health outcomes for more Kansas children.

This three-year, \$1.83 million initiative will help these nonprofit organizations shift systems impacting children's health and high-quality early learning to prepare students of color and those experiencing poverty for a successful learning experience. The initiative will focus on policy and systems change using whole-child and two-generation approaches to improve educational outcomes.

Funded organizations will initially focus on community engagement to help inform a policy agenda. Then, with the help of funders and a technical assistance team, grantees will work to implement their policy and systems change based on their community's vision. As part of the initiative, KHF has provided \$850,000 for three organizations and \$90,000 for evaluation, and the Health Fund has contributed \$300,000 for one organization and \$600,000 to provide initiative-wide technical assistance for the grantees and their work.

Nonprofits selected as part of this initiative and their corresponding efforts, include:

Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition – First 1,000 Days Kansas: Equity from the Beginning (\$299,928 KHF grant)

- This Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition initiative will advocate for state and federal policies to support the optimal health and well-being of families of Hispanic, Black

and other communities of color in Kansas during the first 1,000 days of a woman's pregnancy through her child's second birthday.

- Initial policy focus may include: To ensure that work across sectors impacting the totality of care for families from pregnancy to the second year postpartum is holistic, coordinated, complementary and impactful. This will be done through advocating for policies, such as paid family leave; Pregnant Workers Fairness legislation; Kansas Medicaid (including telehealth coverage, extended postpartum coverage, and doula and lactation services); and educating and training providers about early nutrition and optimal infant and young child feeding practices.
- Areas served: Wichita, Topeka, Wyandotte County, Johnson County and Latino/Hispanic communities in 19 Southwest Kansas counties.

Metro Organization for Racial and Economic Equity (MORE Squared) – Building Leaders for Educational Equity in Northeast Kansas (\$249,000 KHF grant)

- MORE Squared plans to develop new community leaders, raise awareness about the intersections of educational outcomes with broader health equity issues and advocate for a collective educational equity agenda to benefit families and children of color.
- Initial policy focus may include: To advance equity in educational outcomes by organizing parents and stakeholders to identify local policy goals, such as banning pre-K through third grade out-of-school suspensions, removing police from local schools and requiring ongoing training in trauma, anti-racism and child development. Residents and stakeholders may also advocate to raise the minimum wage, limit reliance on revenue from fees and fines for local governments and advocate for criminal justice reform related to narrowing and ending the use of cash bail and increase use of pre-trial diversion for non-violent crimes.
- Areas served: Initially in Johnson County with plans to expand across the state.

Storytime Village – The African American Literacy Coalition (\$300,000 KHF grant):

- This new coalition will provide access to books and family engagement activities, advocate with policymakers and focus on early literacy initiatives to increase the number of African-American students who can read at a proficient level by fourth grade.
- Initial policy focus may include: Centering on laws and policies targeting the Black community that support literacy and education, food insecurity, poverty issues and health care. Storytime will also work to support a living wage, champion the "Imagine, Learn, Grow" early literacy initiative, promote Adverse Childhood Experiences training and integration of trauma-informed practices and increase access to healthcare and support services to give children the healthiest start in life.
- Areas served: Junction City, Kansas City, Lawrence, Topeka and Wichita.

Thrive Allen County (\$300,000 Health Fund grant):

- Utilizing their statewide coalition, Thrive Kansas, Thrive Allen County plans to engage in statewide advocacy efforts to create better access to early childhood development programs on behalf of children and families throughout the state.
- Initial policy focus may include: To advance educational literacy through advocating for early childhood mental health, transportation and workforce development. Stakeholders may organize around advocating for schools and communities to expand their transportation services; provide insurance rebates and more affordable health care options for early childhood development and childcare providers; and extend care coordination services to help families sign up for healthcare, food assistance and rent assistance.
- Areas served: Statewide focus.

Community Catalyst, a national technical assistance provider, has been selected to support the grantees in their advocacy work. EduDream, a Latina owned education research and consulting firm in Chicago, will evaluate this initiative.

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ABOUT THE KANSAS HEALTH FOUNDATION

The Kansas Health Foundation is based in Wichita, but statewide in its focus. With a mission to improve the health of all Kansans, KHF envisions a culture in which every Kansan can make healthy choices where they live, work and play. To achieve this, KHF focuses its work to address health equity in four impact areas: access to affordable health care, healthy behaviors, civic and community engagement and educational attainment. During the past 35 years, KHF has provided more than \$600 million in grants to improve health in Kansas communities.

ABOUT THE UNITED METHODIST HEALTH MINISTRY FUND

The United Methodist Health Ministry Fund (Health Fund) is a statewide health foundation that facilitates conversation and action to improve the health and wholeness of Kansans—especially those in rural and under-served communities. Through funding programs and ideas, providing hands-on expertise, and convening influencers, the Health Fund advances innovative solutions to improve Kansans' health for generations to come. Located in Hutchinson, Kansas, the Health Fund has provided more than \$72 million in grants and program support since its inception in 1986.