Chairman Hawkins and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in favor of HB 2064: Establishing the KanCare bridge to a healthy Kansas program.

The Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) is the statewide membership organization that represents 97 of the 100 local health departments in Kansas. Public health focuses on prevention, reduction of chronic disease, and improving health outcomes.

Expanding KanCare eligibility to 138% of the federal poverty level will provide affordable health care coverage for about 150,000 Kansans. Creating a payer source for many of the clients served by local health departments would be a significant benefit of expansion, but even more important is the increased accessibility that it will create for clients for primary care, preventive services, and/or specialty care beyond the scope of practice of the local health department.

Individuals with insurance coverage (including Medicaid) are more likely to seek services, including preventative care and chronic disease management. Chronic disease is one of the largest drivers of healthcare costs in the United States today, and preventative services are key to not only improving health outcomes but also to reducing costs. Expanding Medicaid coverage to low-income Kansans gives them access to these services and will result in an overall healthier population in the long term.

We support expansion of the KanCare program, which will complement counties’ efforts in public health by bringing federal dollars to Kansas, providing vital revenues to our local hospitals, and reducing the number of uninsured Kansans.

Michelle Ponce
KALHD Executive Director
michelle.ponce@kalhd.org