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Kansas Action for Children
Testimony for the Robert G. Bethell Joint Committee on Home and Community
Based Services and KanCare Oversight

Chairman Hawkins and members of the Committee,

Kansas Action for Children (KAC) appreciates the opportunity to share our concerns about delays in KanCare coverage for pregnant women and infants. We encourage the Committee to direct KDHE to provide regular updates confirming pregnant mothers and infants are receiving the timely medical coverage that is essential for healthy development.

Delayed health care coverage risks the health and well-being of pregnant Kansas mothers and infants. Pregnant mothers who lack early, regular prenatal care experience increased risk of complications like preterm births and low birthweight. Missing routine well-child examinations means infants do not receive screenings and early interventions for developmental and sensory delays. Infants without coverage are less likely to receive recommended on-time immunizations.

These delays can contribute to negative health outcomes that last a lifetime and cost the state in the long run. The Legislature's Statewide Efficiency Review recommended implementing policies that reduce preterm births and costly associated health problems.

Pregnant mothers and infants may be affected by the backlog of KanCare applications and reviews. Federal regulation requires that the determination of Medicaid eligibility for applicants not applying on the basis of a disability not exceed 45 days. Kansas is not meeting this requirement. KDHE reported to CMS that 7,379 such applications had been pending for more than 45 days as of March 13. An additional 14,291 unprocessed reviews had been pending for more than 45 days. This data does not include a breakdown of the number of pending applications or reviews for pregnant women and infants.

Existing Kansas policy should provide presumptive KanCare eligibility for pregnant women. **However, reports from health care providers and the media indicate that pregnant women and infants have experienced delays in KanCare coverage.** In January, the Wyandotte County FIMR testified to this Committee that the timeline from application for services to receiving a medical card and benefits took up to 90-120 days.

At the March 31 KanCare Advisory Council meeting KDHE stated that this situation has been resolved. Additional data is needed to confirm pregnant mothers and infants are receiving the timely medical coverage that is essential for healthy development.

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We respectfully request that this Committee seek data to ensure that Kansas pregnant mothers and infants are receiving necessary health care coverage. This would include the number of pregnant women and infants with pending new or renewal KanCare applications and reviews. We recommend that this Committee direct KDHE to make biweekly updates to CMS publicly available, and to include information about the number of affected pregnant women and infants.

Adequate health care in a child's early years – whether measured in health, educational achievement, or economic success – creates life-long benefits. Please ensure that delays in the KanCare system do not jeopardize the health and well-being of Kansas' pregnant mothers and infants at a critical juncture in children's lives.