



KANSAS HEALTH CONSUMER COALITION

STRENGTHENING THE VOICE OF KANSANS ON CRITICAL HEALTH CARE ISSUES.

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KANSAS HEALTH CONSUMER COALITION LEGISLATIVE UPDATE 2009 LEGISLATIVE SESSION, WEEK 9

MEDICAL DEBT

On March 11th, the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare continued its informational hearing about medical debt. Staff of the Kansas Health Institute (KHI) submitted written testimony that highlighted the link between medical debt and the underinsured.

Next steps: KHCC is collaborating with KHI to develop Kansas-specific data and other information about medical debt. Through this collaboration, KHCC will introduce recommendations for the 2010 Legislative Session. These recommendations will relate to charity care, uniform charges for the uninsured and underinsured, and reforms of the collection process.

CLEAN INDOOR AIR

KHCC is a member and close collaborative partner of Kansans for Better Health (KBH), a statewide network of organizations and individuals whose members coalesced around the 21 Health Reform Recommendations of the Kansas Health Policy Authority. One legislative priority of KBH is statewide clean indoor air legislation.

SB 25, a state clean indoor air bill, passed the Senate by a vote of 26 to 13. This is the first time that clean indoor air legislation has passed the Senate. The bill was introduced in the Senate Committee of Public Health and Welfare and amended by the Senate to exempt casino floors and racetracks, and private clubs if these businesses were established by January 1, 2009. There is also an exemption for designated areas of retirement homes. SB 25 was then referred to the House Committee on Health and Human Services, where it has already received three days of hearings.

SB 25 faces greater resistance in the House because of concerns about the impact to hospitality businesses and about pre-empting local control. Proponents make the case that reputable studies do not indicate long-term financial consequences for businesses. Several local government officials have expressed support for statewide action because opponents have initiated recall petitions after clean indoor air ordinances have been enacted. Supporters believe clean indoor air is first and foremost a public health issue that should be regulated by the state for all Kansans, not just those fortunate enough to live in a community with an ordinance.

On March 11th, supporters of SB 25 held a press conference with Senator Jim Barnett asserting that this is the “most significant health initiative that the legislature could enact this year”.

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