



**Kansas Hospital
ASSOCIATION**

TO: House Social Services Budget Committee

FROM: Tara Mays, Vice President State Legislative Relations

DATE: January 30, 2025

RE: Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) Budget

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee on behalf of our 121 community hospital members. Our hospitals remain committed to serving patients in your communities but we need this committee to continue the investments that we have made in our hospitals over the last few years.

You can help our hospitals in the following ways:

Continuing funding for the Behavioral Health and Patient Observation Program

The state has made great strides in the last couple of years in implementing and funding resources to address the growing mental health crisis we see across the country. Unfortunately, the need for placement at state hospitals continues to be high. The result is that patients continue to await services in hospital emergency rooms sometimes for days, waiting for the services they truly need.

State law is clear that if a physician has found a person to need involuntary commitment and is in the custody of law enforcement, they cannot be held in jail. Instead, it becomes the responsibility of places like hospitals to work with law enforcement to provide places for these patients to be until they are admitted to a treatment facility that can help them. While hospitals, law enforcement, and community mental health centers are required to provide one-on-one monitoring of a behavioral health patient to ensure that they do not harm themselves, it means that medical staff, law enforcement, and others are pulled away from their regular duties, resulting in staffing shortages and additional overtime costs.

Additionally, once placement is available, these patients require specialized transport services, which often cost a minimum of \$500 just to transport a patient to a state hospital, provided by the medical facility.

Last year, this committee addressed these gaps by instituting a \$5 million investment to reimburse hospitals, law enforcement, and counties for these costs that are state responsibilities once they are screened, evaluated and awaiting admissions to a state hospital or state institutional alternatives (SIA) bed. We truly appreciate the recognition that this work has gone on for many years as totally unreimbursed expenses.

As of January, our hospitals have been reimbursed about \$1.9 million in patient observation and transportation reimbursements. The stakeholder groups from the hospitals, the law enforcement community and the counties had worked closely to ensure that this funding was allocated on a per hour basis of \$40. Kansas should continue this program.

Patient Transfer Issues

Kansas hospitals are struggling with getting patients transferred into the right setting at the right time. We believe there are statutory changes in the guardianship laws that could improve getting patients to the right care at the right time. Additionally, KHA continues to hear from our hospitals across the state of patients awaiting transport from one medical facility to another. At the same time, we understand that local EMS faces staffing and budget constraints similar to our local hospitals. However, Kansas patients awaiting medical transport need timely care. We propose the development of

a pilot project for the Johnson/Wyandotte County areas and the Southwest part of the state, to fund privately interfacility transport vehicles to service these areas for the sole purpose of interfacility transfer services.

Behavioral Health Access

Kansas hospitals continue to struggle to access behavioral health beds in state facilities. We support investments in the overall behavioral health access to ensure our hospitals are able to provide patients with the services they need

Medicaid Rate Enhancements

As the state long-term care Medicaid rates have increased to help offset some financial losses , we believe it is imperative for KDADS to continue enhancing Medicaid rates for our long-term care providers in Kansas.

We thank you for your consideration of this request.