



***KHA's Capitol Comments***  
**January 24, 2024**

**Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee**

The Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee, chaired by Senator Beverly Gossage (R-Eudora), discussed bill introductions including the constitutional Right to Health Freedom Act and the Right to Refuse Act.

At the beginning of the meeting, members expressed they had been contacted with requests for hearings on Medicaid expansion and asked if the chair had any plans to hold hearings. The chair indicated she did not have an interest in holding hearings on the topic.

The committee also heard updates on the Kansas Guardianship program. The staff gave an overview of agency budget requests and the governor's budget recommendations. The committee then heard from Jean Krahn, executive director of the Kansas Guardianship Program who gave an agency overview and briefed the committee on outstanding items.

The committee will meet again tomorrow to hear a presentation on youth suicide prevention and the 988 suicide hotline. The committee also is slated to deliberate on outstanding agency budgets before them.

**Senate Ways and Means Committee Hears Updates on Nursing Shortages at State Hospitals**

Today, the Senate Ways and Means Committee, chaired by Senator Rick Billinger (R-Goodland), heard from the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services Deputy Secretary Scott Brunner regarding nursing staffing levels at the four state hospitals. Brunner highlighted they have 1,400 direct care employees at the four hospitals. He shared that the committee vacancy rates for Osawatomie were 38 percent, for Larned 44 percent, more than 25 percent at KNI, and just over 22 percent at Parsons. He shared the current direct care openings and the need in nursing and other specialty areas. Deputy Secretary Brunner suggested that for Larned, the registered nurse vacancy rate is 67.9 percent, and for mental health developmental disability Technicians is 57.4 percent. [View the slides here](#). Brunner highlighted difficulties in competing with agency staffing.

The committee also heard from Yvonne Case, director of operations for Medicaid at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. The committee heard an overview of the timelines and process. Case highlighted that as of the Dec. 31st numbers, 53,444 individuals in Kansas have been discontinued from the Medicaid program. Call response times and process improvements were discussed with the committee.

### **House Appropriations Passes Budgets Hears Bill**

Today, the House Appropriations Committee, chaired by Representative Troy Waymaster (R-Bunker Hill), heard the sub-committee report presented by Chairman Les Mason (R-McPherson) on the Kansas State Board of Nursing and the Board of Pharmacy. The committee made no changes to the governor's budget recommendations for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 for either of those agencies, except for removing one full-time employee position recommended under the Board of Pharmacy.

The committee also held a hearing on [House Bill 2468](#), concerning the state of disaster emergencies, appointing the incident commander by the adjutant general for weather-related disasters, establishing coordinating duties of the emergency management division and establishing the grants and funds to respond to such weather-related disasters. The committee will meet again for bill hearings and agency budget reports.

### **Introduction of Bills**

[Senate Bill 378](#) – Concerning postsecondary education; relating to the Kansas Board of Regents; making and concerning appropriations to the Kansas Board of Regents for fiscal year 2025; providing grants to community colleges, technical colleges and the Washburn Institute of Technology for capital improvements of trade program buildings and facilities and repairs and purchases of trade program educational equipment and fixtures; establishing the Kansas Trade Service Scholarship Act to provide scholarships to students who enroll in certain trade programs; creating the Kansas Trade Service Scholarship Fund – By Senator Olson

[Senate Bill 384](#) – Concerning health and health care; relating to emergency medical services; staffing of ambulances; permitting an ambulance to operate with one emergency medical service provider in rural cities and counties – By Committee on Local Government

[House Bill 2566](#) – Concerning sales and compensating use tax; relating to sourcing of sales; providing for origin sourcing for certain sales – By Committee on Taxation, Requested by Representative Curtis on behalf of Mike Smallwood of the Kansas City Kansas: Chamber of Commerce

[House Bill 2569](#) – Concerning the Kansas Department of Health and Environment; relating to childcare licensing service contracts; requiring the KDHE secretary to not renew such contracts and replacing licensing services with state employees; requiring the secretary to conduct surveys of childcare providers relating to the department's provision of childcare licensing services – By Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development, Requested by Representative Titus on Behalf of KDHE

[House Bill 2570](#) – Concerning employment security law; relating to the definition of benefit year, temporary unemployment, wages, statewide average annual wage and statewide average weekly wage; referencing certain new definitions for purposes of the annual determination by the secretary of the maximum weekly benefit amount; requiring electronic filing of wage reports, contribution returns and payments and interest assessments for employers with 25 or more employees; establishing minimum qualifications for candidates for membership on the Employment Security Board of Review and initial review of such candidates by the director of unemployment; extending when the mandatory combination of rates and the establishment of a new account due to a business acquisition must occur from the beginning of the following quarter to the beginning of the following year; making certain changes to the schedules governing employer contribution rates; removing obsolete language pertaining to the Employment Security Interest Assessment Fund and abolishing such fund; requiring the secretary to create an audit process within the new unemployment insurance information technology system to permit employers to submit reports regarding work search, the my reemployment plan and claimants who do not provide notification or appear for scheduled interviews; providing for notices by the secretary to active employers regarding work search noncompliance reporting options; confirming the Legislative Coordinating Council's authority to extend the new unemployment insurance information technology system's implementation date retroactively and as often as deemed appropriate by the council; requiring the secretary to notify the council of the need for an extension; authorizing the secretary to extend temporary unemployment for limited periods upon request by employers and allowing for additional temporary unemployment when requested by employers engaged in certain industries; requiring the secretary to annually post on the secretary's website certain additional calculations and data; changing the timing of employer benefit charge notices from annually to quarterly; removing the exemption for benefit charges less than \$100 –  
By Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development, Requested by Representative Tarwater