



**An independent voice for
those served by KanCare.**

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Rep. Carpenter and members of the House Social Services Budget Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify as a neutral conferee on HB 2249. I am Sean Gatewood and I appear on behalf of the KanCare Advocates Network.

KAN is a coalition of more than 50 organizations and individuals who advocate on behalf of the 400,000 Kansans who depend upon the Kansas Medicaid program, KanCare, and its seven HCBS waiver programs for their health care and long-term supports and services.

KAN and our partners consistently advocate for policies and legislation that strengthens long term supports and services for persons receiving KanCare Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). Increasing the Protected Income Level has been a top priority for KAN for several years. It is this ongoing support that brings us here to ask you to amend HB 2249 to allow the Protected Income level to be set at 300%, the federally allowed maximum amount. In doing so, you are recognizing the dignity and equality of older adults and Kansans with disabilities while keeping them safe in their own homes: protecting the maximum of income recipients are allowed to keep under federal law.

In 2018, the Kansas Legislature addressed this issue which had long been ignored. For years, Kansans receiving waiver services were allowed to keep only \$747 a month. In 2019, we took the first step to fix the problem by raising the Protected Income Level (PIL) from \$747 to \$1,177 which was at that time, half of the federal maximum allowed. Three years later, the amount is still \$1,177. The PIL amount remains a static amount, meaning when Social Security increases, Kansans on the waivers do not benefit from that increase.

Because we did not index the PIL, Kansans continue to lose their retirement and military benefits, disability benefits or benefits from a deceased spouse, and from being employed. Benefits they have earned and are entitled to. The federal maximum of 300% of Social Security

Income level which is now \$2,382 a month. KanCare waiver recipients may be losing as much as \$795/month.

KDHE recently estimated \$4.4 million SGF would be needed to raise the Protected Income Level/ \$11.1 million all funds. The agency estimated this would eliminate the client obligation for nearly all persons served by the HCBS waivers.

Funding these benefits is a dollar and cents issue. But it's also a dollars and sense issue. Allowing waiver recipients to keep the dollars that they have earned or are entitled to makes good sense. It also:

- Provides an incentive for employment. A cap on earnings is a significant deterrent to looking for a job or striving for a better one.
- Reduces the number of people on the waiting lists for persons with physical or intellectual/developmental disabilities.
- Increase options for older adults who can't afford to participate in the Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE).

We respectfully ask that you support older adults and persons with disabilities by amending HB 2249 to the federally allowed maximum of 300% of Social Security Income.

Once again, thank you all for your previous and continued support in improving the lives of Kansans served by the KanCare program.