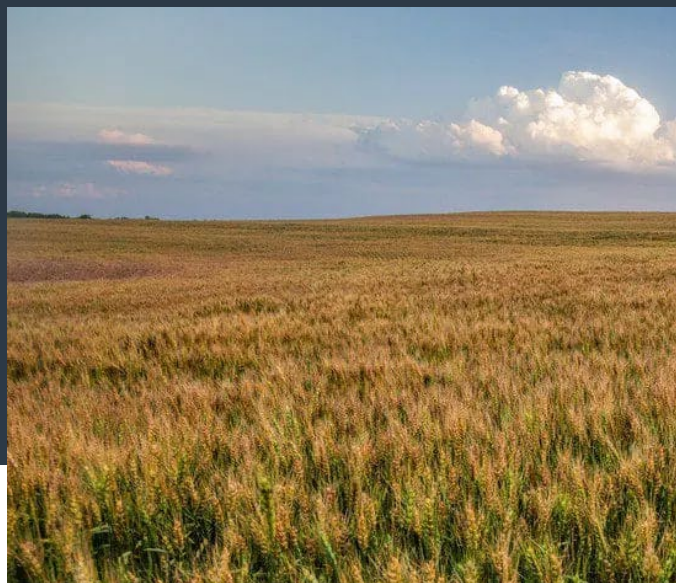


KANSAS VOICES, KANSAS SOLUTIONS NEWSLETTER

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Childcare for Economic Development

It's become common knowledge that childcare that is affordable and available is often impossible for Kansas workers and entrepreneurs to find. The data supports that. Kansas is short an estimated 80,000 childcare slots. And 50% of childcare providers in Kansas are living in poverty, indicating a tenuous business model.

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Childcare for Economic Development Continued

Wendy Doyle, president & CEO of United WE, recently told KBR that several studies her organization has championed found that

- While Kansas is a leader in providing childcare tax credits, few companies take advantage of those tax credits
- 57% of mothers who are entrepreneurs surveyed believe their business would be more successful if they had better childcare options
- Paperwork to comply with regulations at the city, county, and state levels is often required for entrepreneurs to open a childcare business

United WE commissioned the University of Kansas to compile all the regulations at the city and county levels in Kansas to identify specific administrative remedies available to reduce the time-consuming



and costly nature of opening and operating a childcare business. KBR is looking forward to seeing the results of this research when it becomes available.

Hutchinson Makes the Business Case

In 2021, the Hutchinson Community Foundation with seven local partners formed the Reno County Childcare Task Force. It engaged researchers at Kansas State University to perform a market study to identify how many childcare slots are needed, how much subsidy is needed for each slot based on average income, and other data needed to apply for grants and identify long-term solutions.

They learned that 1,600 more slots are needed in Reno County. Also, all slots in the county must be subsidized (parents don't average enough income to cover the full cost). An equity problem also was identified (parents who "know someone" or with the time to make multiple calls to find an open slot are at a distinct advantage).

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Childcare for Economic Development Cont.

A \$6.1 million ARPA grant and a Kansas Accelerator Grant enabled the Task Force to take multiple steps to meet immediate needs, hire staff, and begin the arduous process of building a backend management system to serve as a broker of available slots (instead of parents having to make numerous calls). A 501c3 organization is being set up to standardize administrative processes (like payroll) to support local childcare businesses. The goal of building this business model is to ensure the local economy has quality childcare well into the future.

Wichita Reexamines Regulations

Since 2020, the Wichita Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention has partnered with the Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas to find ways to increase the quality and affordability of childcare.

The coalition engaged local government leaders to address regulations. When Wichita City Council Member Becky Tuttle learned her city's ordinance from 2007 was more restrictive than the state's ratio of staff/children, she championed an effort that resulted in amending the ordinance. Keeping the safety of children as the top priority, the city's effort resulted in creating 600 new slots.

Tuttle is in communications with Senator Chase Blasi and is monitoring efforts of a state-level task force addressing regulations. The next effort on tap for Wichita is to

examine another of its city regulations to determine if it should mirror the state law regarding home-based childcare providers owning and living in the home where childcare is provided.

Healthcare for Childcare Providers?

Recently, the Wichita coalition learned about an Oklahoma program that provides telehealth services and \$100/month for prescriptions to childcare entrepreneurs. Most childcare providers do not have health insurance, which means their services are unavailable when they are ill. The coalition's intent is to request the 2025 Kansas Legislature consider a similar program for an estimated \$500,000/year.

The Docking Institute of Public Affairs at Fort Hays State University reports that most Kansans (79%) believe access to affordable childcare strengthens the economy. And about 75% believe the state government should pass laws making childcare more accessible (Kansas Speaks Fall 2024).



Healthcare—Celebrating Progress and Recognizing Challenges Ahead

At the Kansas Business Roundtable's Annual Issues Summit on September 24, 2024, Dr. Sam Antonios, Chief Clinical Officer at Ascension Via Christi in Wichita, shared his assessment of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) 10 years after most of the major provisions were implemented (January 2014) and discussed the challenges that lay ahead for the healthcare industry in Kansas and nationwide.

ACA Success and Challenge

The ACA's most visible success centers on access to affordable health coverage, particularly for those with pre-existing conditions. Even more, in states that have taken advantage of Medicaid expansion, combined with creation of the health insurance exchange that offers subsidized health insurance options, the ACA has made coverage more affordable to more low-income individuals



and families than ever before. The ACA also implemented many quality measurement and reporting requirements for providers. This reporting has increased transparency and provided

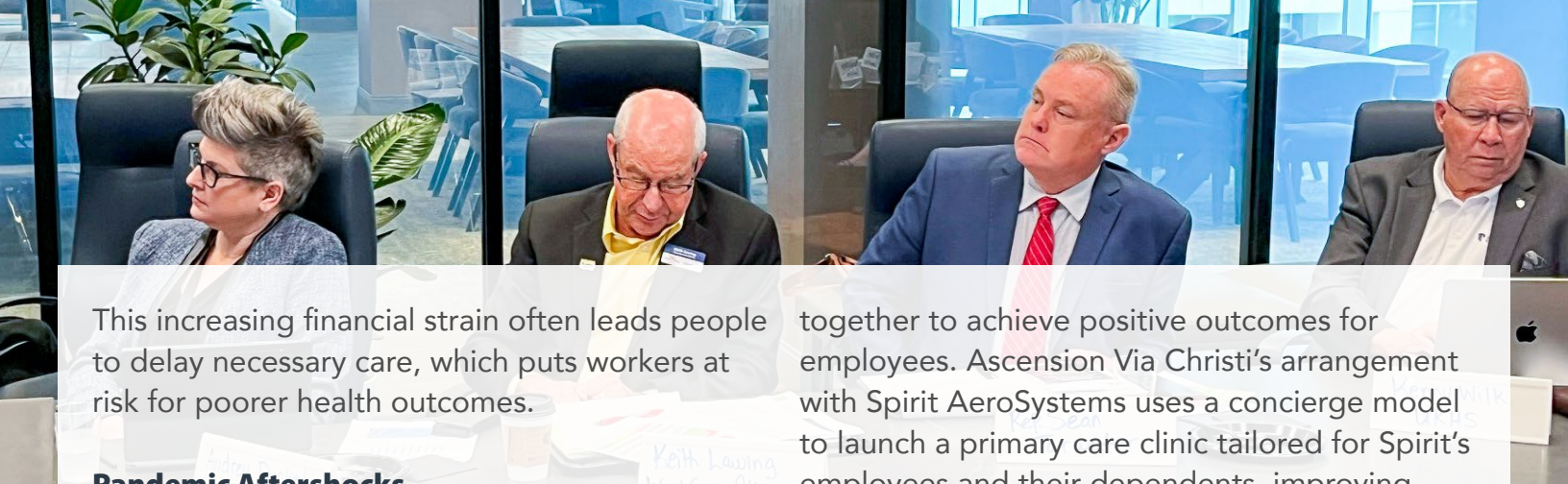
visibility across service areas and states. One significant challenge also emerged. The myriad reporting requirements that Medicare and private health plans implemented have created tremendous administrative burden to hospitals and clinicians.

Going forward, there remains an opportunity for healthcare providers and regulators to better align quality metrics and reporting, so it is meaningful for patients and health plans while minimizing the administrative cost. Additional challenges facing the healthcare industry remain, from rising costs and pandemic aftershocks, but there are bright spots that deserve recognition.

The Devil is in the Deductible

In the commercial health insurance landscape, rising deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses place a growing financial burden on Americans. In 2010, 63% of covered workers had deductibles under \$1,000, but by 2021, the landscape flipped with only 33% of workers with deductibles below that amount. As a result, two-thirds of covered workers face thousands in out-of-pocket costs before they can access their insurance benefits (KFF Employer Health Benefits Survey, 2018-2021; Kaiser/HRET Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Benefits, 2007-2017).

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This increasing financial strain often leads people to delay necessary care, which puts workers at risk for poorer health outcomes.

Pandemic Aftershocks

The COVID-19 pandemic also drastically impacted the healthcare sector and placed an immense strain on physicians, clinicians, nurses, and other healthcare workers. After working in extreme circumstances for extended periods, most health professionals, including nurses and doctors, experienced unprecedented stress and burnout. Many decided to leave the profession. Staffing costs skyrocketed by 25% or more, driven by rising rates charged by agencies providing temporary staff. Replenishing and growing the healthcare workforce pipeline is a critical need.

Hospitals Address Challenges

The healthcare field is seeing an increasing percentage of eligible individuals enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans. These private insurance options have more aggressive administrative processes, including prior authorization, that too often delay access to routine healthcare procedures or deny coverage for necessary care.

Many healthcare providers have called for comprehensive reforms of this program to ensure patients can access the care they need where and when they need it.

Innovative Partnerships with Employers

Dr. Antonios provided an example of how healthcare providers and employers can work

together to achieve positive outcomes for employees. Ascension Via Christi's arrangement with Spirit AeroSystems uses a concierge model to launch a primary care clinic tailored for Spirit's employees and their dependents, improving access to high-quality, timely care.

This arrangement provides same or next-day appointments, immediate access to certain prescriptions, lab work at no cost, and 24/7 virtual physician access, allowing for a more personalized healthcare experience. Each physician is assigned no more than 1,350 patients (compared to the national average of 2,500 to 3,500 patients per physician).

This expanded availability of physicians enables them to spend up to 30 to 45 minutes per patient per visit (compared to the national average of only seven minutes).

In addition, because providers at the clinic maintain a low patient panel with enhanced appointment times and proactive health management, the clinic has achieved higher patient satisfaction and reduced the need for hospital and emergency room visits. This enhanced access has made it possible for patients to receive the care they need, when they need it, and in the best setting.

This partnership with Spirit demonstrates how collaborative healthcare models can enhance health outcomes while controlling costs. It also provides a glimpse into what continued progress in the healthcare industry can look like as we continue to overcome the challenges ahead.



Kevin Walker

**Executive Vice President & Chief Policy Officer
Overland Park Chamber**

Founding Member

Kansas Business Roundtable (KBR)

Why did you help start KBR?

KBR provides a forum to look at issues from a variety of perspectives. That is never a bad thing when discussing public policy. With an array of different voices at the table we can help craft solutions that benefit all Kansans.

What is something you particularly value about the Roundtable?

Getting to work through policy solutions with other leaders from across the state helps me better understand the unique challenges that exist in their part of the state and how possible solutions can be crafted to benefit everyone.

What does the Overland Park Chamber hope to achieve?

Building relationships across industry sectors from different parts of the state. While we may engage in different lines of work, we have

many things in common. Working together on solutions that benefit all of us is a key reason we think the KBR is an important use of our time.

How could other local chambers benefit from membership?

Chambers play an important role in our local communities. We all have a vested interest in a strong Kansas. While Overland Park and Elkhart may be worlds apart in many respects, both are stronger when our state thrives. KBR is a place where we can discuss common interests and work together toward solutions that benefit our communities regardless of where we are located in our great state.

Learn how to get involved in the Kansas Business Roundtable by contacting kwalker@opchamber.org or Kathy.Sexton@wichita.edu.