SATANTA DISTRICT HOSPITAL
HEALTHCARE WITH HEART

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Kim Leggett
(620) 682-8434

Making Health Care More Affordable Will Take All of Us

by Chad Austin, President and CEO, Kansas Hospital Association

SATANTA, KS — Rising costs are everywhere, from gasoline to food to health care, Kansas families, employers and communities all feel the strain of affordability. Kansas hospitals are no different. It is well known that they play an essential role in the health care delivery system, are economic engines within communities, and foundational partners in a healthy workforce and thriving community. Kansas community hospitals are committed to putting patients first by providing compassionate, high-quality care to all Kansans. While firm on that commitment, there are many challenges testing every hospital's ability to maintain that promise.

It is well documented that Kansas hospitals, especially those in rural areas, are financially struggling. According to the most recent Kansas data, eighty-one percent of Kansas hospitals had an operating loss in 2024, yet they continued to provide care to every patient who walked through their doors. The cause of the financial struggles is multi-faceted and includes soaring labor, supply and prescription drug costs; growing numbers of uninsured; reductions in important programs such as the 340B Program; and stagnant reimbursement that in many cases does not cover a hospital's costs in providing care.

In addition to affordable health care, Kansans are right to expect transparency about what their care will cost. Hospitals help patients understand what they can expect to pay and have invested significant resources to meet price transparency requirements. The number that matters most to patients is what they will owe after their health insurance deductible, coinsurance and coverage is applied. That's why meaningful transparency requires health insurers to be part of the solution.

When a patient is struggling to pay a medical bill (whether insured or uninsured), hospitals provide financial counseling and help them know what assistance is available. Hospitals are committed to putting patients first. Each year, Kansas hospitals collectively provide free or discounted care in excess of $1 billion, as well as additional write-offs when insured patients simply cannot afford their deductibles and coinsurance.

Making meaningful progress on health care affordability requires honest conversations about what drives health care costs and a willingness to address affordability across the entire health care system. The goal should be to help patients who genuinely need assistance while addressing the underlying factors that contribute to the cost of their health care.

That means reducing unnecessary administrative costs. It means addressing prescription drug prices. It means ensuring patients can understand what their insurance will cover and what they will owe. It means connecting people experiencing financial hardship with assistance. And it means protecting access to the physicians, nurses and hospitals Kansans depend on.

There is plenty of work ahead. Kansas hospitals are ready to do our part. We need health insurers, pharmaceutical companies, medical supply manufacturers, employers, policy makers and others to collaborate with us in efforts to actually help patients. Because at the end of the day, this is about making sure Kansans can afford the health care they need and that the health care they need is still there when they need it.

About the Author: Chad Austin is the president and CEO of Kansas Hospital Association, a voluntary, non-profit organization existing to be the leading advocate and resource for members. KHA membership includes 249 member facilities, of which 124 are full-service, community hospitals. Founded in 1910, KHA's vision is: "Optimal Health for Kansans and Kansas Hospitals."