



**KY** | **VOICES**  
FOR HEALTH

## 2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

### CREATE PERMANENCY FOR NEW DENTAL, VISION & HEARING SERVICES

Nearly 900,000 Kentucky adults using Medicaid for their healthcare now have comprehensive coverage for dental, vision and hearing services for the first time. Covering glasses, root canals, dentures, and hearing aids for low-income workers gives Kentucky's entire workforce a major homegrown advantage. It's an investment of about \$2 per member per month that will pay dividends – both in savings and better health outcomes. In 2024, we must ensure these services become permanent through regulation or legislation while also working to increase access to these services by improving provider participation through adequate reimbursement rates and reduced administrative burden.

### KEEP KENTUCKIANS COVERED

The Medicaid renewal process and income fluctuations have led to many Kentuckians losing coverage. Legislation should direct the Cabinet for Health & Family Services (CHFS) to implement a Basic Health Program (BHP) as a bridge between Medicaid and Employer-Sponsored Insurance. A BHP is designed to have benefits and provider networks that are similar to Medicaid with no deductible, low premiums, and modest cost-sharing. A BHP also allows for continuous enrollment so that individuals can apply at any time during the year and transition seamlessly between Medicaid and the BHP as earnings increase or decrease without gaps in coverage.

### MODERNIZE NEMT TO IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE

Lack of transportation is one of the most common barriers to accessing healthcare, yet Medicaid-covered Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) is underutilized because it is hard to access. This benefit should be reformed to expand the network of contracted NEMT brokers to include healthcare providers, CHWs, and public health departments with incentives for providing better access to care and improved health outcomes. NEMT services should be administratively housed and managed by CHFS to enhance the state's ability to more seamlessly administer services to eligible Kentuckians and eliminate contractual waste.

### BRING TRANSPARENCY TO THE COST, QUALITY & AVAILABILITY OF HEALTHCARE

Healthcare costs and health disparities accelerated significantly during the pandemic. Kentucky needs an All Payers Claims Database (APCD) to serve as a hub of healthcare claims that can provide insight into the cost and quality of care and identify health disparities across demographics. Data from public and private payers provides an apples-to-apples comparison across health systems, regions, and demographics, so that policymakers and providers can make more informed decisions and target interventions to improve health outcomes and reduce low value care.

### ASSURE NETWORK ADEQUACY, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & LICENSURE UNIFORMITY

Kentucky is facing a workforce shortage across all types of providers, particularly for dental and behavioral health services. Kentuckians seeking care often struggle to find providers who are taking new patients, accept their insurance, and are practicing within a reasonable distance. Professional licensure boards should collect a uniform set of information from licensees in order to have an accurate count of available healthcare providers across the Commonwealth. This should include all practice locations, percentage of time spent in clinical practice, specialty areas, special populations served, and types of insurance accepted.



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### STRENGTHEN SCHOOL HEALTH & SAFETY

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Forty-one percent of K-12 schools in Kentucky don't have a full-time nurse and all schools are struggling to meet the growing need for mental health services. The 2024-2026 biennium budget should include funding to support a nurse in every school, all day, every day. In addition, the School Safety and Resiliency Act (SB8) should be revised to improve implementation and oversight of the requirement for increased mental health providers and to strongly focus on prevention of mental health issues and increasing student resiliency. School nurses and mental health professionals are key members of the school safety team.

### IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR MOMS & BABIES

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In 2018, Kentucky's maternal mortality rate was 40.8 per 100,000 live births, significantly higher than the national rate of 17.4, and Black Kentuckians are disproportionately impacted by maternal mortality with a rate more than double that of White Kentuckians. To address these disparities, legislation is needed to allow Medicaid reimbursement for midwives and doulas; exempt freestanding birthing centers from Certificate of Need (CON); and improve access to prenatal and postpartum physical therapy assessment and mental health resources, breastfeeding and formula supplies, and wraparound community supports.

### MAKE SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENTS IN CHILD CARE

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More than half of Kentucky is a child care desert. In 2021, 13% of Kentucky caregivers with young children were forced to leave or change jobs because of challenges with child care. Between 2020 and 2024, over \$1 billion in federal funding has kept half of Kentucky's child care centers from closing. Without intervention, 41,409 children in Kentucky are expected to lose their child care as a result of the stabilization cliff. Sustaining Kentucky's current child care capacity requires state investment of \$324 million per year. An additional \$100 million investment should go into services currently covered by the CCDBG Block Grant to build child care capacity.

### HELP KENTUCKIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACCESS WAIVER SERVICES

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Nearly 12,000 Kentuckians are spending years and years waiting for much-needed home-and-community based waiver services. At the current rate of funding 50 new waiver placements per year, it will take 168 years for everyone waiting for the Michelle P Waiver to be served. Other waivers are currently being developed to serve Kentuckians not previously served on waivers – those with severe mental illness in need of supported housing and employment services and those with substance use disorders currently incarcerated to continue treatment in the community. Funding is needed to help all of these Kentuckians access waiver services.

## HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES

KVH will be gathering support across the Commonwealth for legislation designed to improve access to affordable healthcare without barriers, reduce health disparities, promote healthcare transparency, address social determinants of health, support basic needs that impact health outcomes, and invest in a strong public health and community safety net.



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