

COA announces legislative priorities

By Chuck Nigro

The Johnson County Commission on Aging (COA) announced a list of 2018 legislative priorities following a fall 2017 legislative breakfast for state representatives and senators.

The COA advises the Johnson County Area Agency on Aging, advocating for senior adults in the county. Commission members are appointed by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC).

The priorities will be recommended for consideration to the BOCC for inclusion in the county's 2018 Legislative Platform.

The first two deserve particular attention, as they can literally save money for our state, something we can all get behind. The first item may not take legislative action, but could be resolved by good oversight by the legislature.

1. We support a timelier processing of Medicaid applications, increased training for state employees who evaluate the KanCare applications, and adoption of a more simplified application.
2. We support legislation to utilize the Guardian Assistance Program (GAP). The state needs to access funds available through Federal Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. This



legislation will save money in the foster care system in Kansas.

3. We support expanding Medicaid to include Kansans at or below the 138 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. We have seen in the past few years how the lack of medical care for senior citizens, including the disabled and low income, have been affected.
4. We support the approval of the dental therapist certification to provide services to nursing homes and underserved counties in Kansas as identified by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services. By adding dental therapists to the dental workforce, more adults and children in neglected counties will be able to have high quality, cost effective, and reliable access to routine and preventative oral health care.
5. We support lowering the sales tax on food. This will put more money in the pockets of consumers, and enable them to spend more on other needs. Kansas has a higher rate than 79 percent of all other states.

The COA also communicated policy positions on several federal priorities to Congressman Yoder and Senators Roberts and Moran. These positions include being against block grant funding for Medicare or Medicaid, and asking that there be no reduction of funding for Medicaid. The COA also supports Medicare negotiating and/or bidding drug prices for Medicare D. ^{BT}

Chuck Nigro is the chair of the Johnson County Commission on Aging.