

A close-up photograph of a woman with a warm smile holding a young child. The woman is wearing a grey top and large hoop earrings. The child is wearing a grey t-shirt with the number '20' and a red graphic. The image has a soft green and blue gradient overlay.

COMMUNITY SPECIFIC INSIGHTS:

# Kansas

THE POWER OF FEAR & TRUST:

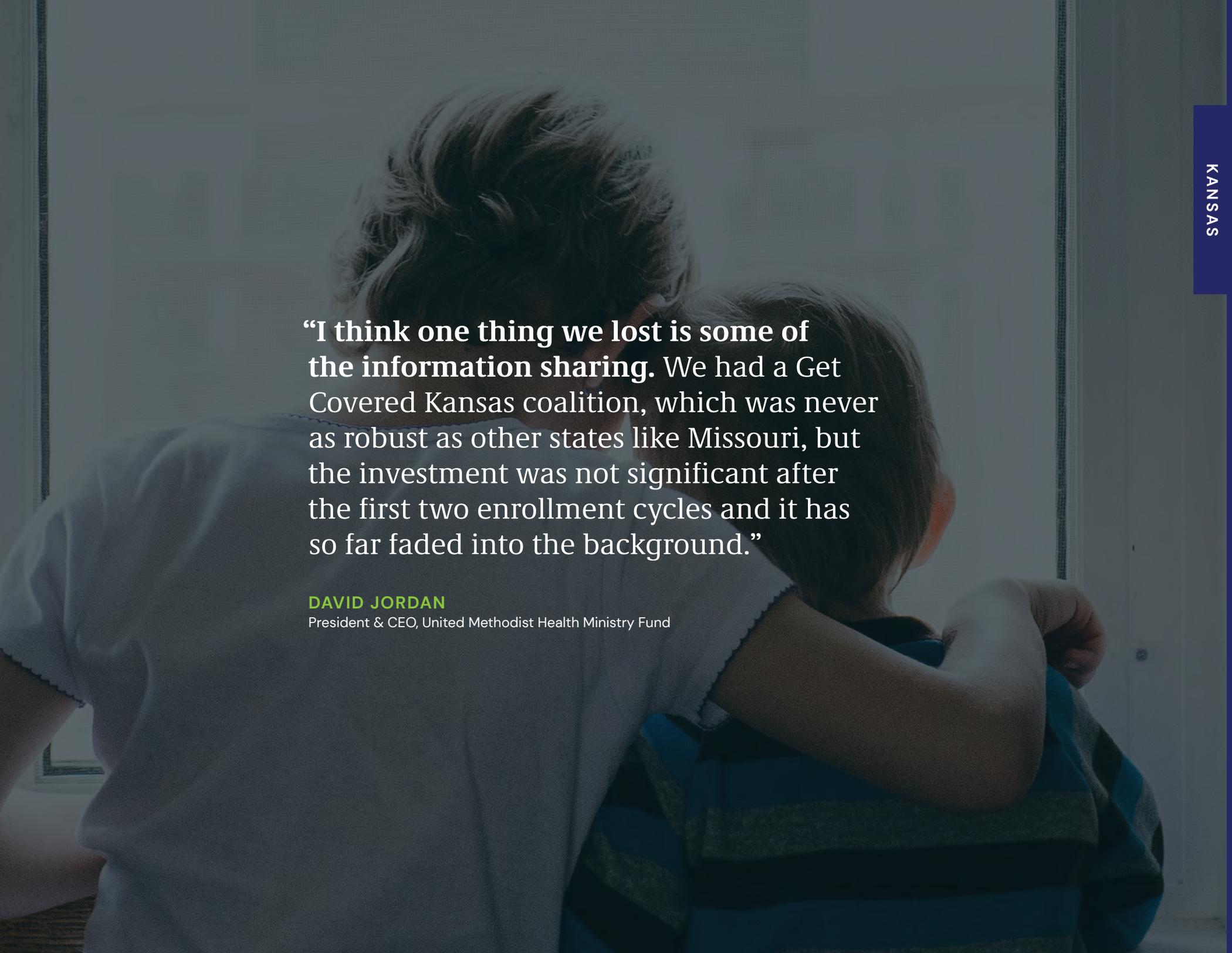
Mobilizing a Movement to Educate, Reassure, and Enroll Eligible Latinx Immigrant Communities in Public Health Benefits

## Kansas

Kansas has not expanded Medicaid eligibility. In addition, all lawfully present immigrants, including pregnant women and children, are subject to a five-year waiting period (known as the five-year bar) before they can access Medicaid.

Kansas is rapidly becoming more Hispanic. The number of Latino residents statewide has nearly tripled since 2000. Roughly one of every five Kansans is Latino. The two most Hispanic cities in the state of Kansas are Liberal and Dodge City, with Hispanic residents accounting for roughly two-thirds of each city's population.

The following insights and recommendations are informed by three stakeholder discussions in Kansas.



**“I think one thing we lost is some of the information sharing. We had a Get Covered Kansas coalition, which was never as robust as other states like Missouri, but the investment was not significant after the first two enrollment cycles and it has so far faded into the background.”**

**DAVID JORDAN**

President & CEO, United Methodist Health Ministry Fund

# KANSAS

## COLLABORATION

- There is a strong foundation to build upon when it comes to shared resources and learnings in Kansas, following successful partnerships between funders, community groups and advocates, as well as the League of Kansas Municipalities. There is a strong track record of collaborative and shared funding between Health Forward Foundation, Kansas Health Foundation, REACH Healthcare Foundation and the United Methodist Health Ministry fund for outreach and enrollment efforts. The foundations also successfully support non-partisan voter engagement, census outreach, and COVID equity initiatives that could provide important lessons and systems for future work.
- The meatpacking industry is a large and growing economic driver in Kansas, employing a significant number of immigrant workers, predominantly in Southwest Kansas. Trust was built through COVID outreach and education, including through unique employer relationships and Catholic priests that can provide learnings for future initiatives.
- Overall, the share of Kansas voters who are Hispanic has more than doubled since 2000, now up to 7 percent. However, community-based organizations, especially those focused on the Latinx population in Kansas, remain focused on education and outreach for those that may be eligible for citizenship but haven't taken that step, with many citing time and money. This could provide an on-ramp for expanding awareness about the U.S. health system and benefits that may be available to immigrant communities.
- Community health workers are already having an outsized impact—not only on outreach and enrollment, but also in terms of building trust among the community and helping individuals realize other avenues for economic opportunities, like GEDs, that may be available to them.

# KANSAS

## COMMUNICATION

- Information sharing and corresponding content production/sharing is a critical need as there has been limited and timebound funding for ongoing outreach and enrollment work in the state through the Get Covered Kansas Coalition.
- Given how rural many communities are in Southwest Kansas, groups have relied on Facebook and YouTube as a tool for distributing messages from trusted messengers, including Catholic priests, to get accurate information into the community.
- Given the large population of Catholics in the state, messaging that has resonated focuses on the importance of taking care of one's neighbor and accessing services.



# KANSAS

## MESSENGERS

- COVID efforts showed that religious leaders are equally as effective messengers as doctors in reaching the Latinx community in rural Kansas. The Latinx population in Southwest Kansas is predominantly Catholic and faith groups and leaders have been at the forefront of dialogue and serve as trusted messengers on a range of issues, including around COVID and vaccines. They are well positioned to create and disseminate information.
- Blanca Soto, former Southwest Kansas campaign director for Kansas Appleseed and candidate for the Dodge City commission, grew up in Dodge City and is steadfast in her commitment to 1:1 dialogues to drive change among the Latinx/Hispanic community. She is a well respected voice and partner in the community and should have a seat at the table when it comes to the intersection of health and immigration in the state.
- Ernestor De La Rosa, Assistant City Manager at City of Dodge City, is a DREAMER and member of the Kansas Racial Justice and Equity Commission, which is working to improve equity and inclusion in Kansas. He could be a valuable ally in this effort, bridging the gap between city and community. The Commission has so far released two reports (Policing and Law Enforcement in Kansas and Social Determinants of Health) which provide an on-ramp to deepen discussions and education on public charge and public benefits. De La Rosa is also the Chairperson of the The Kansas Hispanic & Latino American Affairs Commission (KHLAAC), which serves as a liaison for the Kansas Hispanic & Latino Community and the Office of the Governor. The Commission addresses public policy concerns primarily in the areas related to education, health, and business. The Commission works closely with the Kansas Hispanic & Latino American Legislative Caucus as well as other state agencies in order to improve the lives of all Kansans.
- El Centro Board Chair Catalina Velarde has a background as an immigration attorney and could be tapped to provide trusted insights and messaging about the unique challenges and opportunities in Kansas.

# KANSAS

## PARTNERS

- Community-based organizations like THRIVE Kansas (culture of health prize winner for Robert Wood Johnson Foundation) are increasingly critical in reaching Latinx immigrant populations in rural Kansas. Expand upon existing partnerships and collaborations, including through the Kansas Advocates for Equity, Education and Health, with a refined focus on thawing the continued effects of public charge and making enrollment information accessible to communities.
- Boost outreach and enrollment efforts by funding positions within critical access hospitals, which are more prominent in the state than FQHCs. These positions should be filled with dedicated staff that are culturally competent and bilingual, and who can work within a variety of settings to meet communities in need.
- Explore a potential powerbuilding partnership with the Neighboring Movement, which is spearheading an effort called the Good Neighboring Experiment, and is working to build relationships and power around existing community strengths. Cohorts are predominately Latinx and based in Southwest Kansas, with a spotlight on lifting up the stories of participants.
- The Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition is very active throughout the state and could be an interesting ally in getting accurate information into communities, especially because hospitals are not utilizing best-use practices when servicing Latinx communities. In addition, they've done a lot of federal advocacy and are running home-based programs to meet people where they are.

## KANSAS

### TACTICS

- Build upon the trust and infrastructure put into place through Census Complete Count, work co-funded by United Methodist Health Ministry Fund & Kansas Health Foundation, which deployed grassroots organizers for 18 months leading up to the census. They paired on-the-ground support through Kansas Appleseed with statewide advocacy and targeted advertising to reach rural communities in Southwest Kansas.
- Partner with the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund to create a sermon guide on public benefits that can be incorporated into the existing series for faith leaders to use, putting a spotlight on communities that are already eligible for coverage. This will follow the positive reception that the last guide, Faith in Vaccines, received from the community, and speaks to the intersection of issues facing congregations. Other topics have included trauma and behavioral health, while another is in the works on maternal and child health.
- Tap into ongoing efforts to better understand the unique challenges that Latinx communities face in accessing health care in Kansas, specifically on the heels of research related to telemedicine by the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund.

**“These lawyers are very well known and very well respected in the community. So their word is god.”**

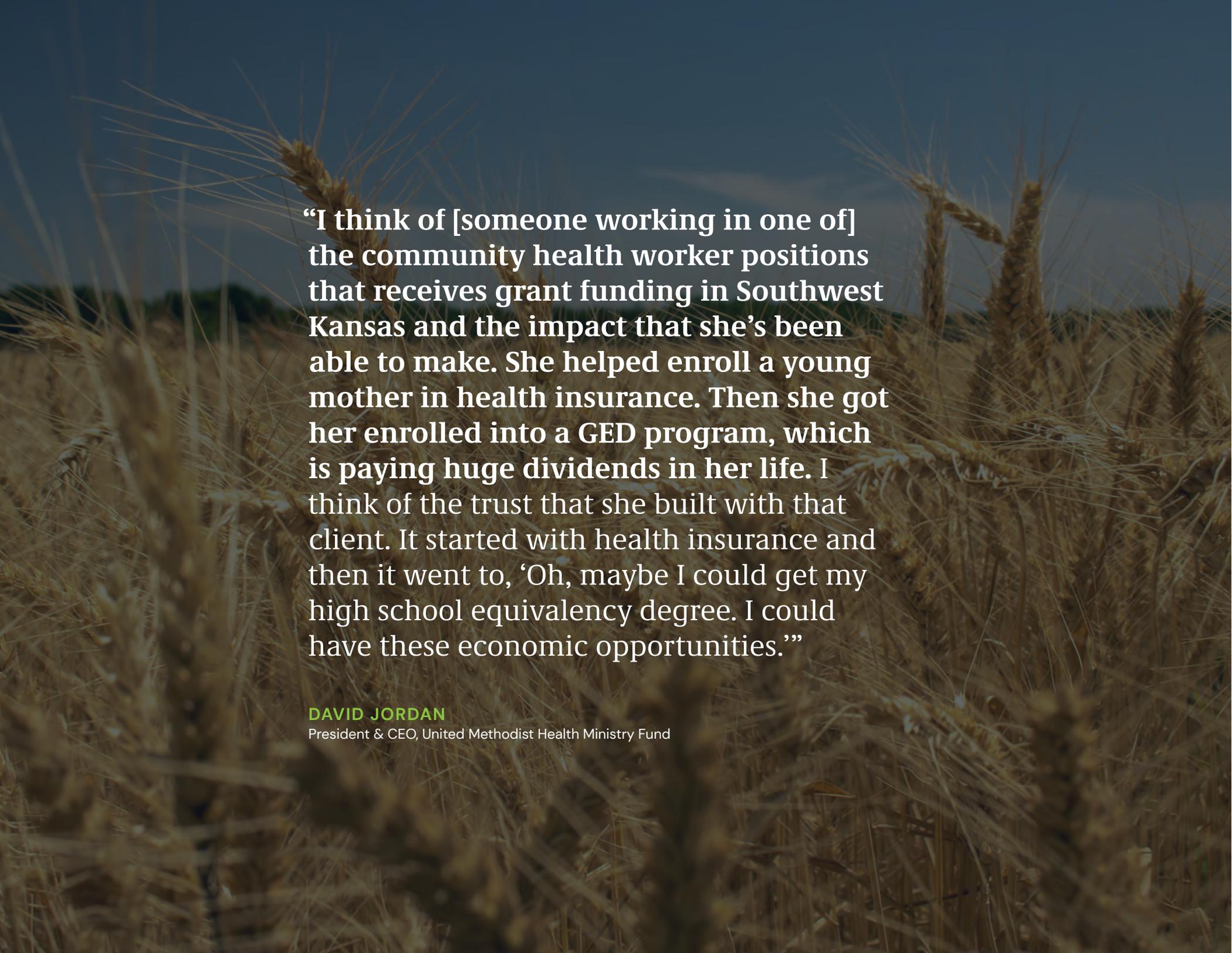
**ERICA ANDRADE**

Chief Program Officer, El Centro

# KANSAS

## POLICY

- Over the last year, the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund worked with advocates, providers, Governor Laura Kelly, the state Medicaid office, and a bipartisan group of legislators to extend postpartum coverage to mothers in Kansas. Funding for this policy change was included in Governor Kelly's budget. This important policy change will mean 9,000 women have access to health care for the full year postpartum. Extending coverage will improve the health of parents and babies as well as reduce costs to the state.
- A bill was recently heard that would have instituted work requirements for all public benefits programs including SNAP and Medicaid, despite the false notion that the beneficiaries of these programs are able to work but choose not to. It was advanced by the Opportunity Solutions Project and eventually got shot down. Given local media coverage, there may be lingering confusion among communities and continued need to make clear that work requirements don't work and only create unnecessary paperwork for people—and the bill was stopped and did not become law.
- There's significant focus on expanding eligibility for SNAP and food assistance programs. At the state level, Kansas has a restrictive policy called the Hope Act, which has strict lifetime caps on eligibility, and also makes it more complicated for access to federal programs. (There's some work underway to ease that burden.)
- Kansas should expand KanCare to cover adults below 138 percent below the Federal Poverty Line (FPL). This would dramatically increase coverage for low-income adults and help increase rates of insurance coverage in Black and brown communities.
- Kansas requires a five-year waiting period before lawfully residing pregnant women and children have access to Medicaid. States have the option under CHIPRA to waive the five-year waiting period and expand Medicaid to allow lawfully present pregnant women and children access to Medicaid.



**“I think of [someone working in one of] the community health worker positions that receives grant funding in Southwest Kansas and the impact that she’s been able to make. She helped enroll a young mother in health insurance. Then she got her enrolled into a GED program, which is paying huge dividends in her life. I think of the trust that she built with that client. It started with health insurance and then it went to, ‘Oh, maybe I could get my high school equivalency degree. I could have these economic opportunities.’”**

**DAVID JORDAN**

President & CEO, United Methodist Health Ministry Fund

## KANSAS-SPECIFIC STAKEHOLDERS

<sup>6</sup> “Expanded Stakeholders” is not a comprehensive list but instead reflective of the organizations that were identified throughout exploratory discussions with national and state stakeholders. They sit somewhere at the intersection of race equity and health justice, with a specific focus on Latinx immigrant communities. These organizations and groups have not been engaged in the development or provided insights for this report.

