



KANSAS HEALTH INSTITUTE

For additional information contact:

Robert F. St. Peter, M.D., President and CEO
Kansas Health Institute
212 SW Eighth Avenue, Suite 300
Topeka, Kansas 66603-3936
Tel. 785.233.5443 Fax 785.233.1168
Email: RStPeter@khi.org
Website: www.khi.org

Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee

February 1, 2012

**A Planned Health Impact Assessment
of Casino Development in Southeast Kansas**

Senate Bills 237, 241 and 319

Robert F. St. Peter, M.D., President and CEO

Kansas Health Institute

Information for policy makers. Health for Kansans.

The Kansas Health Institute is an independent, nonprofit health policy and research organization based in Topeka, Kansas. Established in 1995 with a multi-year grant from the Kansas Health Foundation, the Kansas Health Institute conducts research and policy analysis on issues that affect the health of Kansans.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee,

I am Robert St. Peter, President and CEO of the Kansas Health Institute.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to make a brief presentation and provide information on a planned health impact assessment. We are not here to speak either for or against any of the bills that you are hearing today, but rather, we want to make you aware that we are conducting a health impact assessment (HIA) of casino development which might result from changes proposed in Senate Bills 237, 241 and 319.

The Kansas Health Institute, in partnership with the KU School of Medicine in Wichita, has been awarded a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to fund a project to identify the potential health benefits and risks involved with developing a casino in Southeast Kansas, and to share that information with state policy makers.

What is a health impact assessment? It is a tool for policy makers that provides information about the potential health effects — both positive and negative — of a particular policy, program or project. Just as a fiscal note is used to provide information about the financial impact of a particular piece of legislation, a health impact assessment provides evidence-based information about potential health benefits or potential health risks. An HIA draws on multiple sources of information, including community input, existing research and new data. Because so many things can affect health, a health impact assessment often brings issues to the attention of policy makers that otherwise might not have been discussed. Many decisions affect health, even ones that may not seem to be directly linked to health. For example, a decision to install sidewalks along a road will have an impact on the safety of pedestrians and physical activity, which both are related to health outcomes that include mortality, injury and cardiovascular disease.

A health impact assessment is not meant to make the case for or against a particular policy, or in this case to be either for or against the proposed casino. It is not meant to be an audit or evaluation of a policy or program that has already been implemented. Rather, a health impact assessment is designed to help policy makers and stakeholders understand how a policy might affect health outcomes so that any potential negative consequences can be minimized, or positive benefits enhanced, during the decision-making process.

A number of you on this committee have already attended a short seminar that we conducted explaining the HIA process, and many residents of Southeast Kansas also have been participating in educational meetings about this study. Earlier this week, informational meetings were held in Pittsburg. More meetings are scheduled for next week. Additional, relevant health information and other data are being gathered now. During this process, KHI will assess a variety of potential impacts — including economic (e.g., local and state tax revenues, job creation and personal bankruptcies), behavioral (e.g., alcohol consumption, depression, crime, enhanced social connections and stress relief), and changes to the built environment (e.g., changes in existing or new roads or sidewalks, available greenspace) — and develop recommendations on options to minimize the identified potential health risks, and optimize potential health benefits. We hope to have the results ready by mid-March. We are eager to hear your suggestions and input for making this information as valuable as possible to you in your deliberations.

Additional information about health impact assessments is attached to this testimony. KHI will be conducting health impact assessments on other policy issues as well as part of our mission to inform policy makers about issues affecting the health of Kansans. Again, we welcome your suggestions and input into this process.