

# Community / Opinion

## The Doctor will see you next... month?

BY MARCUS YOAKAM  
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Marcus Yoakam

You sit in a crowded waiting room, meticulously filling out the same paperwork you’ve seemingly already completed before. Nearby, someone coughs violently, without covering their mouth (of course), while sitting just a bit too close. You wonder why you had to take time off work for this. Then you remember: this was the only appointment they had available, and it takes months to see the provider otherwise.

If this scenario sounds familiar, that’s because it is for far too many people. Why is it that you have to wait so long to see the doctor? In this article, I hope to briefly explain where this inequality comes from and ways to address it.

The main reason why you’re waiting so long to get an appointment is quite simple: there aren’t enough providers or staff in rural areas. Rural communities struggle to attract and retain healthcare professionals due to lower pay, professional isolation, and limited resources. According to a 2023 article from the Association of American Medical Colleges on rural health care, there are approximately three times more physicians in urban areas than rural at 286 vs. 98 per 100,000 population, respectively, or ~349 patients per doctor vs ~1,020 patients per doctor - an astonishing gap. This shortage leads to excessive patient volumes and the challenge is compounded by the fact that rural patients, on average, are less healthy and have more complex medical issues. Furthermore, it is not just physicians who are in short supply. Rural clinics are also understaffed when it comes to nurses, nurse assistants, medical aides, and administrative support. This can contribute to high rates of burnout among staff, who are often forced to wear many hats.

So what can be done to reduce these wait times and improve rural healthcare in general? It starts with making it easier and more appealing for providers to practice in rural settings. This could include things like: More rural hospitals and clinics in medical training rotations, which gives students valuable early exposure to rural medicine, expanding rural residency programs, which are proven to increase the likelihood that residents stay in the area after their training, and offering stronger loan repayment and financial incentives for those who commit to serving rural populations. Additionally, when recruiting physicians, hospitals should prioritize recruiting families, not just individuals. The spouses, partners, and children of physicians play a crucial role having supported their loved one through more than a decade of intense training. Their needs and sense of belonging matter just as much as the physician’s and this is where rural communities can truly shine.

The draw of rural life is not cowboy hats and spaghetti western cliches, it is personal. It’s about being in a place where distance is measured in minutes and kindness in various baked goods. It’s a sense of belonging, where a casserole travels faster than bad news and saying things like, “I’m fuller than a tick” won’t catch you any side-eyed glances. Hospitals need to emphasize that a rural hospital is not just “an ER with more beds”, it is a pillar of the community offering care, essential services, and a major source of economic strength and opportunity. For physicians and their families, practicing in a rural region provides them the unique opportunity to make real, long-lasting changes in the community almost immediately. However, this kind of impact is only possible when rural hospitals are supported and as of last week, that support is under a very serious threat.

With the recent passing of the Big Beautiful Bill, the state of Kansas alone is projected to lose about \$3.897 billion in federal and state Medicaid funding according to FOX News. Additionally, over 13,000 Kansans are expected to lose access to Medicaid leading to higher uninsured rates and placing even more strain on already vulnerable rural hospitals. While the Senate

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## Yes, there’s a way to make child abuse horrors less common in Kansas — but it’s not what you think

BY RICHARD WEXLER  
Kansas Reflector

A child dies a gruesome death. The child was “known to the system.” In fact, the case file had more “red flags” than a Soviet May Day parade. That leaves everyone asking: “How could it have happened?”

The answer is counterintuitive. Tragedies like the death of Zoey Felix, who was killed after slipping through the cracks, happen in every state. But they are more likely to happen in Kansas. That’s because Kansas has embraced an approach to child welfare that can be boiled down to: Take the child and run. Kansas tears apart so many families needlessly that workers have less time to find those very few children — like Zoey — who really do need to be taken.

Kansas takes children from their parents and consigns them to foster care at a rate double the national average, even when rates of child poverty are factored in. Those are only the placements the Kansas Department for Children and Families admits to. Add what DCF calls “police protective custody” placements — foster care in all but name — and Kansas probably takes away children at triple the national average; the third highest rate in America.

Overwhelmingly, parents whose children are taken are nothing like the killer of Zoey Felix. In 76% of cases in which DCF took away a child in 2023, there was not even an allegation of sexual abuse or any form of physical abuse. In 78% of cases, there was not even an allegation of any form of drug abuse.

Far more common are allegations of neglect. Sometimes that can be extremely serious; more often it means a family is poor. Kansas was the scene of a massive natural experiment illustrating the confusion of poverty with neglect. When former Gov. Sam Brownback slashed public assistance, foster care numbers went up. Conversely, study after study finds that even small amounts of additional cash reduce what agencies like DCF call neglect.

The class bias is compounded by racial bias. Black children are in foster care in Kansas at more than quadruple their representation in the general population. More than half of all Black children will endure

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## Two burning questions for law enforcement in wake of Kansas council member investigation

BY MAX KAUTSCH  
Kansas Reflector

The fruitless investigation into Lenexa City Council member Melanie Arroyo’s qualifications to serve as an elected official has mercifully ended after Lenexa police, acting on a tip from the Kansas Bureau of Investigation (which operates under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General), secured a copy of Arroyo’s naturalization certificate.

Arroyo, who was naturalized in 2018, was cleared of any alleged wrongdoing regarding her immigration status.

But to justify the investigation, the city claimed that Lenexa police “had no choice but to investigate the matter because it is the City’s obligation to ensure” that Arroyo was “legally qualified to hold the position.”

No harm, no foul? Not exactly. The public awaits satisfactory answers to at least two burning questions.

**Why did the KBI forward the tip to Lenexa police?**

On July 8, 2025, a 74-year-old private citizen living in Lenexa left a voicemail for the KBI that mischaracterized legislative testimony Arroyo gave months earlier. As the KBI put it to Lenexa police, the tipster was concerned because Arroyo’s testimony advocated for “giv(ing) illegals more benefits” and allegedly “never acknowledged” whether she had become a naturalized citizen.

Opinion editor Clay Wirestone neatly unpacked the tip’s factual inaccuracies earlier this month. But he wasn’t the first to do so. Lenexa police knew by July 23 that the tip was bogus, noting that after reading

the testimony, “one would assume her immigration status was satisfied.”

It’s unclear whether anyone at the KBI read the testimony. Had the KBI spent the perfunctory amount of time it would have taken to verify Arroyo’s academic accomplishments, such as reading the testimony and calling the institutions at which Arroyo had studied, the agency would have learned that the tipster’s concerns did not amount to even reasonable suspicion that a crime had been committed.

Instead, on the grounds that the KBI does not typically investigate immigration-related matters, the agency forwarded the tip to local police to respond “however you deem appropriate.”

Immigration issues may well be out of the KBI’s wheelhouse. But on its website, the agency claims its mission includes “providing timely and accurate information to the criminal justice community.” Here, the agency either exercised discretion to forward an easily discredited tip or did so as a matter of course, letting the chips fall where they may.

Neither approach advances the agency’s stated mission to provide accurate information to its law enforcement partners.

**Why did Lenexa police investigate the tip?**

Apparently, it made no difference to Lenexa police that the tip failed to clear any evidentiary threshold. To them, receipt of the tip meant a police investigation was required.

According to a police spokesperson, whenever police discover “any complaint brought to our attention

about matters pertaining to Lenexa City Code,” the department must “carr(y) out (its) duty to investigate.”

And as Lenexa city attorney Sean McLaughlin told Kansas Reflector, “just because evidence doesn’t exist doesn’t mean we don’t investigate.”

To the surprise of probably no one, the department’s internal policies do not support the notion that police were mandatorily obligated to investigate the tip.

According to public records obtained by Kansas Reflector and others, police described the tip internally as a “complaint regarding the citizenship or naturalization status of a City of Lenexa council member” in violation of a city ordinance requiring office holders to be “qualified electors.”

But department policy is silent about how police are to handle a tip from the KBI about an alleged violation of city code. Further, that ordinance contains no criminal penalties, raising the question of whether a police investigation into allegations that did not amount to commission of a crime was ever necessary.

Even so, the department’s “Investigations Division” created an “Investigative Report” about an “offense” Arroyo was accused of committing, strongly suggesting that police were operating under the assumption that they were conducting a criminal investigation.

If so, they fell short of their own standards.

Under Policy Directive 600, which

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## word+genius

WORD OF THE DAY

### Appetency

[APP-ə-dən-see]

**Part of speech:** noun  
**Origin:** Latin, early 17th century

1. A longing or desire.
2. A natural tendency or affinity.

Examples of Appetency in a sentence

“Ice cream topped with pickles was the strangest appetency that she had during her pregnancy.”

“My grandfather passed along his appetency for woodworking and carving.”

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(USPS 120-600)

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THE COFFEYVILLE JOURNAL

by

MONTGOMERY COUNTY MEDIA, LLC

OFFICIAL CITY PAPER

OLDEST NEWSPAPER IN

SOUTHEAST KANSAS

Established October 30, 1875

PUBLISHED WEDNESDAY AND SATURDAY

at 716 S. Maple, Coffeyville, KS 67337

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