Chair Pilcher-Cook and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB362.

The Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) is a member of the Kansas Marketplace Consortium. Historically, health departments have played the role of gap filler within their local communities. Many of our fellow Kansans, who were previously uninsured, are now able to purchase private health insurance. Recognizing that some may need assistance in exploring options and completing the application process, many of our health departments stepped up to fill this gap as well.

Our navigators have taken on this task in addition to their already full-time jobs and receive no additional compensation for doing so. They have chosen to do this as a service to their community.

We agree that it is vitally important to protect the privacy of consumers. All Navigators employed by health departments are required to complete 20 hours of training, successfully pass a national criminal background check, attest to any potential conflicts of interest, and execute a Navigator Support Agreement in which our health departments commit to providing supervision of the Navigators employed within their departments and responsible oversight of service provision at the local level.

This bill grows state government and creates new layers of bureaucracy. It also imposes unnecessary costs on tax payers for implementation and ongoing administration. The Consortium has already implemented measures, as described above, to safeguard the private information of consumers who receive Navigator services; this bill duplicates work that is already being effectively managed at the local level.

Health departments are a well-known and well trusted component of our local communities, and they are often the place residents turn to for aid in matters related to health services. Two of the 10 Essential Public Health Services are informing, educating, and empowering people and linking people to health services. This is exactly the work they are doing as they provide Navigator services.

It is unlikely that health departments would be able to continue providing Navigator services under the new regulations and costs imposed under SB362, thus, leaving many Kansans without needed education and assistance in order to obtain health coverage.

Michelle Ponce
KALHD Executive Director

The Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) is a nonprofit association dedicated to strengthening local health departments for the purpose of improving and protecting the health of all Kansans. KALHD’s membership consists of 99 of the 100 local health departments in Kansas.