



**House Welfare Reform Committee
Testimony in Opposition to HB 2140
February 7, 2023**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss how HB 2140 impacts older Kansans and caregivers, many of which are served by Area Agencies on Aging or the Older Kansans Employment Program (OKEP).

The AAAs were added to the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1973 to be “boots-on-the-ground” organizations charged with helping older adults live with independence and dignity in their homes and communities. The Act mandates that AAAs use the flexibility provided in the law to ensure local needs and preferences are taken into consideration and the resulting local service delivery system is tailored to the community. Today, AAAs coordinate a complex local service delivery system that serves millions of older adults and caregivers in every community in the country, providing access to critical home and community-based services, including employment services for individuals. The AAAs serve all 105 counties in Kansas.

The **Older Kansans Employment Program (OKEP)** is funded by the Kansas Legislature through the Kansas Department of Commerce to assist individuals who are age 55 and older in obtaining gainful employment. The state is divided into seven districts of varying size, and each district has an OKEP administrator.

During fiscal year 2022, OKEP served a total of 2,288 participants and placed 1,067 into full-time or part-time, private sector employment at an average wage of \$13.02 per hour for an average of 27 hours per week, resulting in \$19,504,845 in wages paid, over 38 times the amount expended on the program.

OKEP Services can include:

Resume Preparation
Assistance applying for job in the digital age
Interview Coaching
Skills Assessment
Counseling and Encouragement

The United States Department of Agriculture recommends using MyPlate to determine the per meal minimal nutritious requirements for an older adult using MyPlate:

Protein: 3 oz
Grain: ½ cup or 1 oz
Fruit: ½ cup
Vegetable: ½ cup
Dairy: 1 cup

Inflation has adversely impacted an older adult’s ability to meet the USDA recommendations. Since a person has 38.35% less buying power for food items, SNAP serves a critical role for families and the economy in providing resources to purchase food and stimulating the local economy.

Under this bill, Kansans aged 50-59, already struggling to put food on the table, will now be subjected to a minimum 30-hour-per-week work requirement. From the perspective of an older adult who is planning for retirement or has a chronic condition that restricts their ability to drive or work a 30-hour-per-week to receive nutrition assistance, HB 2140 has potential to be detrimental to their physical, emotional, and cognitive wellbeing. Inflation has severely limited resources for everyone, which drives costs even higher. The below illustration reflects a 17.24% - 21.4% increase in the monthly cost of nutritious meals within a two-year period.

Year	Low-Cost Meal	Moderate-Cost Meal	Liberal-Cost Meal
2021	\$ 255.60	\$ 317.52	\$ 384.24
2023	\$ 300.24	\$ 372.12	\$ 446.40

Source: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnpp/usda-food-plans-cost-food-reports-monthly-reports> (2/3/2023)

The Social Security Administration defines work as “gainful if it is the kind of work usually done for pay, whether in-cash or in-kind.” The challenge is related to an employer hiring an older adult eligible for gainful employment. OKEP recognizes the struggle of an older Kansan seeking employment in an environment where employers recruit candidates with substantial knowledge of technology.

The Area Agencies on Aging oppose HB 2140 for the reasons stated above and ask the committee to reconsider the challenges of an older Kansan who has limited access to nutrition, and vote no on the bill.

Thank you,
Leslie Anderson
Executive Director