

SB22, SUPPORT, ORAL & WRITTEN TESTIMONY – Nina Kimbrough

1/23/2023

Madam Chair and Honorable Senators,

I am writing to you on behalf of over 11,000 low-income Johnson County residents who will benefit from the passing of SB 22. As you may know, the Johnson County Christmas Bureau (JCCB) is a 501(3)c nonprofit that provides a free shopping experience for over 3,500 low-income families each year. During the winter holidays our client guests are invited to make an appointment and shop at the Holiday SHOP. We have been providing this invaluable service to our neighbors for 62 years and it has always been completely free. We distribute tons of food and thousands of quality items that our clients would otherwise not have during this time. Qualified client guests shop for groceries, personal care items, children and teen's clothing, children and teen's coats, children and teen's toys and gifts, adult gifts, books, and holiday extras. Last month 1196 seniors who reside in nursing homes were also provided with a care package including sweaters, pants, lap blankets, personal care items, a gift and an extra something just for them. We have been able to provide necessity items seamlessly even throughout the pandemic. This incredible Holiday SHOP experience is possible because of 125 year-round volunteers and 3,000 seasonal volunteers. We operate with one full time executive director and one part time administrative assistant. Everyone else is a volunteer. The year-round volunteer team leaders begin shopping for merchandise the day after Christmas for the following year. With the passing of SB 22 we would be able to keep up with the rising costs of food and merchandise without cutting the quality or quantity of what we can provide to our low-income neighbors.

Many of us know of or have seen how the stress of poverty can impact a child's learning and well-being. Our efforts at JCCB help to relieve the stress of the holidays for families who are struggling to pay their rent, their medical bills, put food on their table AND provide something extra during the holidays.

We have so many recipients who are grateful to JCCB and send notes and cards expressing how meaningful the experience is and how much it has impacted their families. They continue to share their testimonies with us. One such client wrote, ". . . and the icing on the cake was that for the first time, my twin girls were able to go back to school in a brand new coat! They have never had a new coat. I was proud to send them in a beautiful coat with only their name written on the inside! Thank you JCCB for and all the volunteers for caring so much about me and my family." Another wrote, "We are a single income family with 4 adopted special needs children, one biological child and one foster baby. The abundance of items JCCB provided was invaluable and so helpful. We are extremely thankful!"

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions and/or comments you may have regarding JCCB. My email is director@jccb.org. The Johnson County Christmas Bureau has been operating for over 60 years and with your help we plan to provide warmth and sustenance to our low-income Johnson County neighbors for many years to come. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

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