



EPISCOPALCOMMUNITYSERVICES
Feeding the Hungry  Changing Lives

February 6, 2017

Beau G. Heyen
President/CEO, Episcopal Community Services, Kansas City
SB 95 Testimony for Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

Chairwoman Schmidt and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 95. Episcopal Community Services is a Kansas City area nonprofit working to engage the broader community in feeding the hungry and in empowering the poor to move beyond the barriers of poverty with dignity through education and job training. Through our work at the Kansas City Community Kitchen, a network of 17 food pantries and meal programs spanning across the entire Greater Kansas City area, and our Culinary Cornerstones Training Program, ECS represents a growing list of organizations and individuals committed to ending hunger and helping people move towards self-sustainability.

Speaking with those we serve, we know that safety net programs like SNAP and TANF are critical to several aspects of life, including health and the ability to access to meaningful, gainful employment. As leaders in addressing food insecurity, we also know that without these vital front-line, safety net programs, food pantries and soup kitchens will further struggle to meet the needs of those we serve. The changes proposed in Senate Bill 95 will provide substantial impact on the most vulnerable of Kansans and those who serve them.

Modify TANF work requirement for new mothers and Remove statutory prohibition for waivers
Those we serve face numerous barriers in accessing healthy, nutritious food, often barely making it paycheck to paycheck. While intended to promote people returning to work, the actual implications of short relief from work due to childbirth or the rigidity of reinstating waivers can pull the rug out from under those already living on the edge. As people feel undue pressure to return to work, they may take positions that do not further their ability to move to self-sufficiency, resulting in additional, long-term reliance on an already stretched emergency food system.

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Easy and efficient access to services are also key to helping families obtain assistance. For families and individuals living in crisis, every moment counts. Delaying services due to waiting for mail service further causes more reliance on emergency food systems, often spreading resources thin.

On behalf of our hunger relief network and those we serve, we request that the committee fully and emphatically support Senate Bill 95. Please do not hesitate to let us know if there are any other opportunities to help move this important bill forward.

Thank you for allowing us to an opportunity to represent those we serve.

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Senate Public Health and Welfare

Date 2.7.17

Attachment ?