

El Centro



To: Chairman O'Donnell, Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee
From: Irene Caudillo, President & CEO
Date: February 2, 2017
Re: Senate Bill 95 "SOAR Act" – Support

On behalf of the low income and Latino community we serve in the Wyandotte and Johnson County area, I would like to Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 2064, also known as "SOAR Act"

As President and CEO of El Centro, a well-respected non-profit that has been serving the needs of the Latino community in both Wyandotte and Johnson counties for the past 40 years, we are in support of this bill.

At El Centro, we firmly believe in our mission, "*Strengthening communities and improving lives of Latinos and others through educational, social and economic opportunities.*" A significant part of meeting our mission is that of ensuring those opportunities to enjoy good health and quality of life for individuals and families.

El Centro was founded to meet the needs of the Latino population in Kansas City, Kansas. Throughout the past 40 years, our programs and services have evolved to meet the needs of our ever-changing populations in Wyandotte and Johnson counties. From our dual-language pre-K Academy for Children, Health Navigation, Promotoras de Salud, Economic Empowerment, and Advocacy, we are here to give a voice to the voiceless.

The majority of clients we work with are those who are employed, however, these are low-paying positions without benefits. It is necessary for these families and individuals to afford nutritious food. Over the last four years, El Centro has assisted more than 2,000 eligible applicants per year complete their SNAP benefits application. For those who are qualified for SNAP benefits, the process is complex and lengthy. With the number of applications that we assist, language barriers and clients who struggle with literacy, the opportunity of DCF accepting a telephonic voice signature on behalf of the applicant will streamline the process and work better for both the community and DCF.

Because of these reasons and to make the state of Kansas more responsive to our most vulnerable, I support **Senate Bill 95, AKA "SOAR Act"**. Thank you again for your consideration of this act and the opportunity to testify on behalf of many Kansans. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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Date 2-7-17

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