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Chairman Suellentrop and members of the committee. SB 379 came about after a discussion with the director of policy and economic and employment services at DCF regarding what we can do to help maintain our cluster of skilled aerospace workers in Kansas. SB 379 allows the Secretary to request a waiver of SNAP time limits under the exceptional circumstances provision in the federal code.

Currently we can only apply for a waiver if our 12-month average unemployment rate is over 10% or 20% or more above national average and did not drop below 6% during the 24-month period. This is why we need to consider allowing the Secretary the ability to apply for a waiver if they can establish that there are insufficient jobs for the employment of such individuals using criteria that is not less restrictive than the criteria established under the federal code.

Allowing able-bodied adults without dependents the ability to have more than 12 weeks of food assistance in a 3-year period should help us retain these workers in the state of Kansas. During periods of exceptional circumstances, parents who do not have primary residential placement of the children and young men and women who have aged out of foster care, and individuals with undiagnosed mental or physical challenges may also have difficulty finding work and would benefit from this waiver.

These time limits were last previously waived in April of 2009, and helped an estimated 28,000 Kansans during the recession. Many of these individuals have just received training and returned to work and may have already exhausted their time limit of 12 weeks during the three-year period.

While it is my sincere hope that this tool never has to be used, I think it is in the best interest of our state to have it available in case our aviation economy does not recover as fast as we hope.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mike Petersen