



February 22, 2021

Committee on Children and Seniors
Kansas House of Representatives

Re: House Bill 2371 - Removing Restrictions for SNAP Eligibility

Chairwoman Concannon and Members of the Committee:

Health Forward Foundation provides leadership, advocacy, and resources to eliminate barriers and promote quality health for the uninsured and underserved. Since our inception 15 years ago, Health Forward has dedicated more than \$317 million toward health in our community, which includes Allen, Johnson, and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. State-level policies greatly impact the well-being of those most in need throughout our communities. **We support HB 2371 and removal of cooperation with child support from requirements for food and child care assistance.**

Kansas' restrictions on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and child care subsidy limit access to healthy food choices, particularly for women and people of color. The financial recession created by the pandemic has added even more barriers to nutritious foods and child care assistance. According to the Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey for January/February 2021, eight percent of households in Kansas lacked sufficient food in just the last seven days. Nationally, 21 percent of Black and 20 percent of Latin households have experienced food insufficiency, in comparison to seven percent of white households. Additionally, the pandemic poses some of the biggest challenges for low-wage workers who cannot access child care if they are unable to work remotely. Child care is an essential need, particularly during a time when the state continues to mitigate the long-term effects of the pandemic. COVID-19 has had disastrous consequences for working women and their families, and removing barriers to child care subsidies is one way we can lessen the disproportionate impact on women.

Removing cooperation with child support from eligibility requirements for access to public benefits would be a much-needed relief for all Kansans who are facing financial hardship exacerbated by the pandemic. An individual's ability to receive critical supports, such as SNAP, should not be connected to their ability to pay child support. Cooperation requirements leave families more vulnerable and threaten children's lives as well as custodial and non-custodial parents' well-being. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this issue. We stand ready to be a resource to the committee as it relates to supporting policies that help all Kansans achieve their healthiest lives. Please feel free to contact me at mbryantmacklin@healthforward.org.

Sincerely,



Health Forward
FOUNDATION

McClain Bryant Macklin
Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives