

TESTIMONY OF HALEY KOTTLER
THRIVING CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR
KANSAS APPLESEED CENTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE
IN OPPOSITION TO SB 501
MARCH 10, 2022

Members of the Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare:

My name is Haley Kottler; I am a Campaign Director for Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive, and just communities.

Kansas Appleseed opposes SB 501. This bill undermines basic Kansas values of fairness. It further tells Kansans with low income that the rules are different for them. This will dramatically increase government bureaucracy. This puts too many burdens on Kansans, too many burdens on state agencies, and it is a fiscally irresponsible proposal from an out-of-state lobbying organization with little regard for the effect it will have on struggling Kansans.

This bill subjects low-income Kansans to intrusive burdens. When big companies or wealthy individuals in Kansas get tax breaks and financial assistance, they are not subjected to onerous requirements that attempt to strip them of their dignity. We work with people everyday that struggle to navigate our systems for benefits that are meant specifically for them, and this bill makes the process even more difficult. Life events, such as a move to a new address or a family member passing away, would now mean even quicker burdensome paperwork requirements than the burdens already imposed.

This is a big government proposal that would dramatically increase government bureaucracy in order to make things harder for struggling people. Hundreds of new government employees would be hired and tens of millions of dollars of taxpayers money would be spent to comply with red tape data requirements. State agencies with the mission of promoting the health and welfare of our citizens would be transformed into continuous data checking operations. Any limited savings these unnecessary data checking requirements might find would be vastly surpassed by the extensive costs of performing them. These provisions will instead likely cause thousands of families who need and qualify for assistance to lose federal benefits that would have boosted local economies. Instead, more of Kansas tax dollars will be sent out-of-state to pay for the federal benefits received by those in places that don't erect these barriers.

There is no evidence that these measures are needed. This expensive expansion of bureaucracy should not happen on the whim of out-of-state lobbyists. The state should be ensuring that every Kansan has basic access to necessities when they are struggling. This bill will undoubtedly make it harder for Kansans to thrive.

For all these reasons, Kansas Appleseed opposes SB 501.