

February 1, 2016

To: Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee
From: Erin Besson, Kansas Association of Community Action Programs (KACAP)
Re: Senate Bill 372

Chairwoman Pilcher-Cook and members of the Committee,

The Kansas Association of Community Action Programs is the membership association for Community Action Agencies in Kansas that are working to create economic opportunity and end poverty in their communities. One of our primary goals at KACAP is to promote and encourage policies that empower individuals and families to reach self-sufficiency. A family is self-sufficient when it can meet its basic needs without assistance from public or private organizations. On behalf of our members, we stand in opposition to SB 372 and share the following concerns.

Increasing the burden for families to receive assistance hurts Kansas residents and the economy. SB 372 includes new restrictions and limitations that will make it more difficult for families to receive needed support. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Childcare Assistance, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are all programs that help families in poverty reach self-sufficiency. In 2010, more than 24,000 Kansans received TANF assistance, while in 2014 only about 12,000 received support under TANF. At the same time, data indicate that more Kansans were in poverty in 2014 than in 2010. Decreasing the number of Kansans who can receive assistance from work support programs does not translate into a less vulnerable population. Instead, further limiting access to TANF, SNAP, and Childcare Assistance will negatively impact the state's economy.

Kansas should be creating more economic opportunities for its residents. The path to self-sufficiency and a strong economy includes providing temporary help to those who need support through tough times. When struggling Kansans are given a boost while they maintain employment in low-wage jobs, they can continue to work and seek out better, more lucrative positions. This ultimately leads to a strong workforce and a stronger economy.

Increasing the administrative burden on the state will result in a less efficient process. SB 372 requires the Department for Children and Families (DCF) to increase its monitoring duties, adding to its already cumbersome responsibilities. The proposed legislation also mandates additional staffing at DCF, which is likely difficult or impossible in these times of decreased revenue for the state.

For the reasons already stated, KACAP asks the Committee to oppose SB 372.