



TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 2015

Presented to
Kansas House Committee on Welfare Reform

Tuesday, February 4, 2025

Roy Lenardson, *Visiting Fellow*
Opportunity Solutions Project

Chairman Awerkamp and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 2015. My name is Roy Lenardson, and I am here on behalf of the Opportunity Solutions Project.

I want to start with a simple truth: Food is not just fuel. It is the foundation of life, of strength, and of purpose. The choices we make about what we eat determine not just how long we live but how well we live. Yet today, too many Kansans—too many Americans—are trapped in a system that profits off poor health.

One in five children in America is obese. One in three adults is prediabetic or diabetic. More and more of our friends, neighbors, and family members are facing chronic diseases that would have been unthinkable just a generation ago.

And what is the #1 item purchased with food stamps? Soda.

This is not just a policy issue—it is a moral issue.

We don't allow SNAP benefits to be used for alcohol or cigarettes because we know those things are harmful. So why are we subsidizing soda and candy—products that drive diabetes, heart disease, and obesity—while spending billions on Medicaid to treat those very conditions?

The simple fact is this: Taxpayer-funded nutrition programs should promote nutrition.

Why This Bill Matters

1. Kansas Taxpayers Are Paying for Both the Junk Food and the Consequences

- 72% of Kansas SNAP recipients are also on Medicaid, meaning that the same taxpayers funding food stamps are also paying the medical bills that follow.
- Obesity-related Medicaid costs are exploding, draining resources from schools, infrastructure, and other critical state priorities.

2. Kansas Has an Opportunity to Lead the Movement to Make America Healthy Again.

- While Kansas was the first last year to introduce this concept, more than a dozen states now have bills pending across the country, and a handful of governors have already made requests for a waiver.
- This is not about punishing anyone; it's about ensuring food assistance programs actually promote health.
- WIC already does this—the Women, Infants, and Children program excludes soda and candy, and WIC participants have better diet quality because of it.

3. Access to Healthy Food Is Expanding

Some will argue that people use food stamps to buy soda and candy because they don't have access to healthier options. But today, that's simply not true

- Major retailers like Dillons, Walmart, and Amazon now deliver fresh groceries statewide, ensuring that families in rural and urban areas—can access healthier foods with their SNAP benefits.