



February 11, 2025
Lisse Regehr, CEO
Thrive Allen County & Thrive Kansas
Written Testimony in Opposition to SB 161
Senate Committee on Government Efficiency

Chairwoman Erickson and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 161, Thrive Allen County and Thrive Kansas's mission is to ensure our rural communities have access to the resources they need to alleviate poverty and poor health outcomes- so everyone in our communities can thrive.

Thrive Allen County (TAC) and the Thrive Kansas CARES (Coordinating and Assisting Reliable Enrollment Services) with on-the-ground partner organizations assist Kansans in 45 counties with access to health insurance, SNAP, and other public assistance programs with our Community Health Workers (CMS Navigators) who are trained in assistance navigation. TAC is a trusted community partner and current CMS Navigator, SNAP Access, and DECK substance misuse use support awardee.

SB 161 is particularly concerning to both Thrive Allen County and Thrive Kansas, as its current broad language suggests that any change through the federal government for public assistance programs waiver authority would require the approval of the Legislature. Programs like KanCare (Medicaid and CHIP) and SNAP require the ability to quickly comply with any federal changes to continue serving the Kansans accessing their services in the most cohesive and responsive way possible. Additional and unnecessary levels of bureaucracy harms these efforts and is inefficient.

As it currently stands, how SB 161 is written significantly hinders and slows the operations of public assistance programs in our local communities by adding more redundant government red tape. These programs do not operate in a way where they make light of their responsibilities or the taxpayer dollars that fund them. Rather, they are uniquely qualified to adapt to ongoing federal changes and act in accordance with current applicable state law. If passed, the Legislature would be responsible for both staying up to date with these federal changes and responding to them promptly, costing additional tax-payer dollars, and preventing community organizations from serving communities until the legislature convenes for their annual three-month session. Ultimately no longer allowing the Legislature to be as effective and efficient as possible during session with the already limited time given to address other issues. It is also important to highlight that SB 161 does not attempt to explain how the process of obtaining legislative approval for changes to public assistance programs would occur outside of session, and how they are protecting the continuity of services provided by local organizations in our rural communities.

Wasting legislative resources on duplicative bureaucratic checks, as proposed in SB 161, would incur greater costs than warranted by insignificant program/waiver changes. We believe in accountability, and current programs and statutes take that into account to ensure efficient and transparent use of taxpayer dollars to assist eligible Kansans.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 161, please reach out to me directly for more information and if you have any questions at lisse@thriveallencounty.org

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisse Regehr".

Lisse Regehr

CEO of Thrive Allen County/Thrive KS