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Partners in America's Poverty Fighting Network

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Gary Brunk, Executive Director
Kansas Association of Community Action Programs (KACAP)
Testimony for Senate Public Health and Welfare on Senate Bill 256

Madam Chair and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee and to voice opposition to Senate Bill 256.

KACAP is the membership association for Community Action Agencies in Kansas that are working to create economic opportunity and end poverty in their communities. In order to create economic opportunity, Community Action Agencies work to better focus available local, state, private and federal resources to assist low-income individuals and families to acquire useful skills and knowledge, gain access to new opportunities and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

While there are several provisions of this bill that we oppose because they undermine the state's already fragile safety net, I want to focus my comments on the prohibition to use broad-based categorical eligibility for food assistance and to advertise the availability of food assistance.

The Federal government allows states to use broad-based categorical eligibility to determine SNAP eligibility for households that qualify for a non-cash Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or State maintenance of effort (MOE) funded benefit. That provision – used by 42 states – and a state's ability to make limited use of federal funds for SNAP outreach, are designed to make food assistance available as efficiently and broadly as possible to individuals and families who are hungry or at risk of hunger.

By prohibiting broad-based categorical eligibility and advertising, Senate Bill 256 in effect creates barriers to obtaining food assistance in Kansas. What is the rationale for doing this?

Surely it is not because it is better for children, who when not hungry are better prepared to learn in school and succeed in life because they have adequate nutrition. In fact, research shows that when compared to adults who did not receive SNAP as children, adults who received SNAP as children were significantly less obese and significantly more likely to complete high school.

KACAP Member Agencies and Board of Directors

Community Action, Inc.
East Central Kansas Economic Opportunity Corporation
Economic Opportunity Foundation
Harvest America Corporation

Mid-Kansas Community Action Program
Northeast Kansas Community Action Program
Southeast Kansas Community Action Program
Wichita Sedgwick County Community Action Partnership

And surely the rationale for making it more difficult to obtain SNAP is not that it is good for the struggling Kansas economy, since every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.70 in economic activity.

Why would we not want the 15 percent of all Kansas household who struggle to put food on their tables to benefit from food assistance? Why would we not want the majority of SNAP recipients who are children, elderly or disabled to have better nutrition?

Because we believe that Kansas should not be creating barriers to obtaining food assistance, KACAP urges this Committee to reject Senate Bill 256.