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SB 372 Testimony for Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

Chairwoman Pilcher-Cook and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns about the changes in eligibility for Kansas public assistance proposed in Senate Bill 372. KC Healthy Kids is a Kansas City area non profit focused on reducing childhood obesity by shaping policies to improve access to healthy food. We oppose the proposed changes.

Nearly half of all Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Assistance (SNAP) participants are children, and 82% of all SNAP benefits go to vulnerable houses that include a child, elderly or disabled person.

Lack of consistent access to enough food because of a lack of resources is frequently described as “food insecurity.” **In Kansas, one in five households which included children were food insecure in 2013 and nearly half of Kansas households headed by single women with children face food insecurity.**

Changes proposed in this bill would negatively impact low-income children and families. SNAP is an important tools designed to help struggling families as they work to escape poverty. **By design, SNAP is a temporary program only available to Kansans for three months every three years for abled-body adults.** Kansas already experiences historically low SNAP participation rates in comparison to other states and ranked 44th in the nation with an estimated 69% of SNAP eligible Kansans actually participating.

The costs and consequences of hunger among our most vulnerable are many, including decline in health status and increased rates of chronic disease. **Economic studies have estimated the costs of food insecurity in Kansas to be in excess of \$1.62 billion annually.** The changes made in this bill would only exacerbate these costs and provide additional barriers to vulnerable Kansans accessing temporary food assistance. For these reasons, we respectfully request that the committee oppose SB 372.