

February 6, 2017

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Food Equality Initiative, Inc.  
SB 95 Testimony for Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

Chairwoman Schmidt and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 95. I am a proud Kansas wife, mother and CEO of Food Equality Initiative (FEI). FEI is a Kansas based nonprofit with a mission to improve health and end hunger in low income individuals diagnosed with food allergies and celiac disease through access to safe and healthy food, nutrition education, and advocacy. We believe the changes in Senate Bill 95 will make a positive impact on the health and economic sustainability of our most vulnerable citizens.

Food insecurity is defined by the lack of resources to provide enough food to live an active and healthy lifestyle. In 2015, a report released by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimated **22.3% of Kansas experienced low and very low food insecurity**. In 2015, my family was a part of this statistic.

After a job loss, my husband and I enrolled in the SNAP program in 2015. This program allowed my family to purchase nutritious food from local grocery stores and farmer's markets during tough economic times. The nutritious food we purchased fueled my young daughter's growth and sustained our family during a job loss and several months in a low wage position. Although we were only on SNAP for 9 months, this personal experience drives the work I do each day with clients at Food Equality Initiative each day.

Allowing the DCF Secretary the authority to request the federal waiver for work requirements options when there is high unemployment and insufficient jobs would increase access for low income children and their families the tools and resources to improve their lives and escape poverty. Safety net programs, such as SNAP are critical to reducing food insecurity in our communities.

Senate Bill 95 will also provide the ability to submit telephonic signatures, which would improve the food assistance application process.

For these reasons, we respectfully request the committee support Senate Bill 95, which will ensure our most vulnerable citizens will have access to the resources they need to thrive and be productive citizens.

Senate Public Health and Welfare

Date 2.7.17

Attachment 8