



United Community Services of Johnson County

Testimony to Chairperson Schmidt and the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee February 3, 2017

SB 95

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United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) is a nonprofit agency that provides research and data analysis, leads collaborative planning, and mobilizes resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services in Johnson County and the surrounding region.

On behalf of the residents of Johnson County and of all Kansas, we urge your committee to pass the SOAR ACT as proposed in SB 95 which addresses policies and procedures that act as barriers to qualified recipients.

SB 95 supports important policy considerations that increase educational attainment for parents with dependent children; establish return-to-work requirements for new moms that consider the health of newborns and the high cost of infant care; and update administrative policies to better meet the needs of Kansas residents and the agencies who provide application navigation support.

In Johnson County, one in 19 people, or 30,400 county residents, lived below the federal poverty level in 2015. Of those residents, 13,273 lived in extreme poverty, of whom 37% were children. Extreme poverty is defined as less than 50% of the federal poverty level or an income of \$840 a month for a household of three. Currently, the TANF income limit in Kansas for a household with at least one dependent child under age 18 is 28% of the federal poverty level which is equivalent to less than \$475 a month for a family of three.

UCS has been researching trends in TANF enrollment and policy changes over the last five years. There has been a 66% decline in Johnson County families enrolled in TANF over that time period as work requirements and other policies have changed. However, poverty in Johnson County has continued to grow during this same period.

Changes to state rules and policies in recent years have appeared more focused on reducing caseloads than helping families succeed. These changes have hurt the poorest of Kansas families, who have turned to the state for access to federally supported programming. Adoption of SB 95 helps remove unnecessary barriers and gives families in Johnson County and across Kansas better access to the very programs which were created to provide a pathway out of poverty.

Submitted by: Julie K. Brewer, Executive Director

Senate Public Health and Welfare

Date 2.7.17

Attachment 19