

February 6, 2017

Lisa Markley, MS, RDN
Registered Dietitian
SB 95 Testimony for Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

Dear Chairwoman Schmidt and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Senate Bill 95.

As a dietitian and health educator, I am writing in support of this bill. Programs like TANF and SNAP provide a crucial safety net that is important for ensuring the nutritional health of Kansas children and families. Below are my reasons for supporting the recommended changes in the bill that I think will have an important impact on improving the lives and health of those in need.

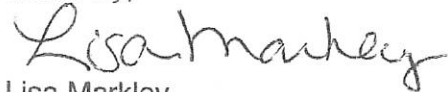
In order to improve the Food Assistance application process, please consider approving changes recommended by the bill that would allow the acceptance of an applicant's voice signature over the phone. This would remove some of the cumbersome steps currently in place (hand-written paper applications and signatures) that make it a time-consuming barrier for applicants. This would not only improve expediency on behalf of the applicants giving them access to the resources they need in a timelier manner, but also for those working on behalf of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Improving access to food assistance and reducing these barriers can make it possible for those in need to not go without food and to increase their access to nutritious foods.

I would also like to encourage you to consider modifying TANF work requirements for new mothers. I am in support of the proposed changes to reinstate the work requirement back to one year from the change that was made in last year's HOPE Act that shortened the requirement for new mothers to return to work within two months of giving birth. From a nutritional standpoint, breastfeeding rates diminish when mothers have to return to work quickly, which may impact the nutritional health of their infants and require them to become more dependent on additional resources to supply them with infant formula. When mothers are able to breastfeed longer, their infants suffer from lower rates of infection, lower risk of SIDS, and the mother also benefits from reduced risk of breast cancer.

Lastly, I would also ask that the DCF Secretary have the authority to request a federal waiver for the work requirements option during economic times when finding employment due to insufficient job availability may occur.

Once again, the safety net that TANF and SNAP provide for our Kansans in need provide critical resources for them to gain access to nutritious foods and resources they need to thrive. Thank you for considering my testimony in support of Senate Bill 95.

Sincerely,



Lisa Markley
913-439-0069
cooktonourish@gmail.com

Senate Public Health and Welfare

Date 2.7.17

Attachment 25