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February 21, 2020

Patrick Hutchison  
Agency Relations Manager / IT Director  
Kansas Food Bank  
SB 379, Testimony for the Public Health and Welfare Committee

Chairman Suellentrop, Vice Chairman Berger, Ranking Member Bollier and members of the committee:

I am Patrick Hutchison and I am here today representing the Kansas Food Bank in Wichita. Our nonprofit network includes over 750 pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, health departments, and public schools across our 85 county service area in Kansas providing emergency food assistance to hungry and food insecure children, seniors, and adults.

The Kansas Food Bank supports SB 379, which would return to the Secretary of the Department for Children and Families the authority to request a federal waiver for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) who are receiving time-limited Food Assistance benefits during times of economic crisis and high unemployment.

As agency relations manager at the food bank, I work with our network of food pantries and soup kitchens that are on the front lines providing emergency food assistance every day. Last year our charitable network provided over 12 million meals to individuals and families throughout Kansas, the most ever. In September we opened our new 21,000 square foot volunteer center to address this continued need of our fellow Kansans for food assistance, and in November total distribution since our founding in 1984 passed the quarter billion pound mark.

In Kansas, 12.7% of the current population is food insecure, which means that more than 370,000 Kansans lack consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life. This level of food insecurity exists during a growing economy with relatively low unemployment because while the economy is strong, it is uneven. But what happens when the next recession hits? We already see many people working multiple jobs who still need help putting food on the table.

It is estimated that it would take over \$181 Million dollars to put every missing meal on the table for hungry Kansans for the year. Our network simply does not have the capacity to meet the need on its own. The charitable sector, no matter how efficient our pantries or well-meaning our volunteers, simply can't do it alone. We need the state to respond as well.

We are facing a particularly uncertain future in Wichita, with layoffs and work slowdowns related to Boeing 737 MAX production. We don't know how long this situation will go on, or the long-term impact it will have on Wichita's aviation industry. But we do know that if the situation becomes more dire in a few months and the legislative session has ended without the passage of this bill, the Secretary of DCF will be unable to seek an ABAWD waiver to help people who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

Feeding the hungry is a public-private partnership and we need to ensure that Kansans have access to federal nutrition programs in times of need. We ask for your careful consideration and vote in support of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Hutchison  
Agency Relations Manager / IT Director  
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