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Harvesters—The Community Food Network and the Association of Kansas Food Banks
Opposition to Senate Bill 501 – Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Chairman Hilderbrand and members of the Committee:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of Harvesters—The Community Food Network, the Kansas Food Bank and Second Harvest Community Food Bank, which comprise the Association of Kansas Food Banks. Together, our food banks serve the food insecure in all 105 counties in the state. Last year, our networks of charitable food pantries distributed nearly 51 million pounds of food to those in need in Kansas, from our smallest rural communities to major metropolitan areas.

We oppose Senate Bill 501. While this bill makes it more difficult for Kansas families to receive both food and healthcare assistance, our testimony will focus specifically on the food assistance provisions. In reading this bill, we have struggled to find who these provisions help.

They don't help Kansas taxpayers, who will be on the hook for tens of millions of dollars to increase bureaucratic red tape and hire hundreds of employees to manage it. Kansas already has the 10th highest cost-per-SNAP-application in the nation because of the amount of red tape in the program, and this bill would only raise those costs.

They don't help people who want to curtail the growth of state government. This bill would add hundreds of state workers to the payroll and result in no corresponding cost savings to the state.

They don't help state workers, who will have to manage all of this unnecessary paperwork, for no benefit to the state or the Kansans they are trying to help. These provisions would increase administrative inefficiencies while at the same time making these programs less effective.

They don't help food insecure families, who will be overwhelmed with paperwork. People who are already struggling to put food on the table will have to navigate a system designed to catch them in an error that will make them "non-compliant," thus reducing the SNAP rolls. While the number of Kansans on SNAP may be reduced, the bill does nothing to improve their food security. In fact, food insecurity will rise under these provisions because Kansans will lose vital federal food benefits.

They don't help grocers. The SNAP program brings more than \$300 million dollars into the state that Kansans spend in their local grocery stores every year. Cutting Kansans' access to those SNAP benefits directly harms local grocers.

They don't help food pantries. Without access to federally provided food benefits, food insecure families have nowhere to turn but to Kansas' already overwhelmed network of charitable emergency food pantries. These pantries, many of which are volunteer led, are found in churches and community centers throughout our state. The burden to feed food insecure Kansans will be left to them, while federal resources that could help are turned away.

Apparently, they help an organization in Florida.