

The attached PDF is written testimony for SB501.

3/7/2022

David Herdman

Retired – 15-year volunteer for Harvesters – NE Kansas Food Bank supporting several hundred food pantries in Kansas.

Home address 11704 Delavan Ave

Kansas City KS 66109

Opposition to Senate Bill 501—Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Chairman Hilderbrand and members of the Committee:

My name is Dave Herdman and I live in Kansas City KS. I was born in Edwardsville Kansas and retired about 4 miles from where I was born. I am a 15-year volunteer for Harvesters, our food bank distribution center in Northeast Kansas. I help Harvesters feed the hungry and help to eliminate hunger in the future.

I see every week the people who are helped by what we do. At Harvesters, we distribute about 6 million pounds of food a month, and we still don't reach all the people necessary.

I am writing to oppose SB501.

I am listing several reasons that I oppose the additional cost and red tape of the bill. But before all those facts, I want to let you see what I see as a volunteer and tell you about the people that are helped. When I started volunteering with Harvesters, I thought the people I met would be those that don't want to try, that are homeless, etc. What I found was that it was our neighbors. Being hungry doesn't discriminate. We're all one big medical bill or one layoff from needing assistance. I see the people that come for help. They are single mothers, or people taking care of a parent or grandparent with dementia. They call us volunteers to get help filling out the 16-page form to receive \$1.40 per person per meal. I talk with kids who get back snack lunches and split the lunch in half to take half home to their siblings. I see people in Johnson County, one of the richest in the country, needing help because of a job loss or a company layoff. This bill will make it more difficult for these people to eat. They are us.

The bill puts undue paperwork burden on families as well as the state. It is a template of a bill an organization from Florida distributes to many states and doesn't take into account our local state regulations already in place. It will make it even more costly for the state as well as families to apply.

1. Kansas' form for food assistance is already 16 pages long and has to be reconfirmed twice a year. Compare that to Missouri's form which is eight pages long and is also difficult to complete. SB501 adds even more red tape for state organizations as well as families which will increase state costs for the program.
2. 2/3 of the people receiving food assistance in Kansas are seniors, disabled, and children. These people will be negatively affected by attempts to add red tape to the system.
3. Of the remaining 1/3, over half are working (the working poor) and ¼ of those take care of someone else temporarily.
4. Good nutrition makes for a healthier workforce. It makes for better education of kids. Many of us see every day the difference food can make. Putting up barriers will not strengthen the work force.
5. Food assistance has an extremely low fraud rate. USDA reports that 99% of people receiving benefits are eligible. Because Kansas has the EBT cards in place, the fraud rate is less than 1%.
6. Food assistance helps our local grocery stores. And local grocery stores are some of our best Harvester supporters.
7. USDA works closely with locals to eliminate trafficking. The rate of trafficking in Snap benefits is less than 1%.

In summary, this bill tries to fix something that isn't broken in Kansas. Our state has been careful to make the program effective and for the correct people. Our biggest problem is we still can't get to all the people that need help (33% of those that are qualified don't get benefits). Adding SB501 bureaucracy will be costly and will make that number higher.