

March 7, 2022

Cindy Harold

Wallace County Ministerial Alliance Food Pantry

110 Main Street

Sharon Springs, KS

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 Wallace County Ministerial Alliance Food Pantry in opposition to Senate Bill 501. I am representing this organization as the Manager/Administrator of this food pantry. This position is entirely volunteer hours.

I am a Kansan through and through. I am a retired teacher/librarian. I have served children and families my entire life. The welfare of children has been of utmost importance to me whether at school, at church or in my community. Food insecurity was certainly an issue.

As a food pantry volunteer, I am very aware of how hard the people of my county are working to keep families together and well taken care of.

Most families with children that we serve are non-traditional—grandparents raising grandkids on very limited resources. These are the children who are eligible for SNAP. This is another way they can provide healthy food for these children. If not for these grandparents and the SNAP assistance, these children would be in foster care. This bill only adds to the burdens of these families. It will bury struggling food insecure Kansans in paperwork, and also overwhelm state workers with unnecessary bureaucratic red tape. The additional red tape will cause Kansans to lose their food assistance benefits, meaning they will have less money to spend in Kansas' nearly 2,000 SNAP-approved stores, harming local grocers. SB 501 does nothing to solve food insecurity. In fact, it will increase food insecurity and put additional pressure on Kansas' emergency food pantries in churches and community centers in rural and urban communities throughout the state.

The majority of Kansas' charitable food pantries are run by volunteers, and we are still seeing so much need in our community. Families can be fine one day, and then not be able to put food on the table the next. We have been overwhelmed with needs this year and have functioned on a very small budget. We survive by the generous contributions of our community. These families do not need less to take care of these children.

I ask for your thoughtful consideration and vote in opposition to this bill that will:

- cost Kansas taxpayers tens of millions of dollars, increase food insecurity among working poor Kansas families and put additional pressures on community food pantries trying to help their neighbors.
- bloat state government, increase food insecurity and overwhelm the charitable food pantries in Kansas.
- make these important family support programs more costly and less effective, further overburdening Kansas' charitable food pantries.
- Leave so many Kansas children vulnerable to food insecurity.