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Oral Testimony in Opposition to SB 363
House Committee on Welfare Reform

Chair Awerkamp and Members of the House Committee on Welfare Reform,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on behalf of Kansas Appleseed in opposition to SB 363. This bill would codify many of the changes enacted under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (HR 1) into state statute, and more so, including directing the creation of a new data-matching system and establishing restrictions on eligibility determinations.¹ These added barriers to SNAP only delay and harm the needed relief to Kansans struggling to make ends meet.

Kansas Appleseed is widely recognized for its advocacy on food accessibility and the partnerships it has built to address food insecurity in the state. The provisions of SB 363, particularly the data-matching system, would place an undue burden on social service workers in the state, who already face high case loads, creating delays and increased errors. Ultimately, Kansans who need food assistance to feed themselves and their families will carry the burden of such delays and inefficiencies. These are hardworking Kansans who simply are not making enough money to get by. They cannot afford to wait for bureaucratic delays when their child is missing a meal.

As you can see below in the breakdown of SB 363's provisions, the adverse impact of the bill is not an abstraction. Each of these provisions will affect Kansans who work and provide for their families every day.

Section 3 Summary

Creation of a Data-Matching System: KDHE and DCF will enter into data-matching agreements with various state agencies to create a system that automatically and regularly verifies the eligibility of SNAP beneficiaries. The automated system will review data for indications of change in circumstances that may affect eligibility for food assistance. Enrollees determined to be noncompliant or ineligible for food assistance will be provided with a 30-day notice and disenrolled from the program.

Section 3 Impact

Automated eligibility verification systems pose significant risks for SNAP administration, particularly when used to increase the frequency or rigidity of eligibility checks. Research on SNAP and Medicaid administration demonstrates that automated data-matching systems routinely increase wrongful terminations and "churn," in which eligible households lose benefits for procedural reasons and are later forced to reapply.² These systems tend to flag

documentation gaps, data mismatches, or missed notices as ineligibility, even when households remain eligible, shifting agency resources away from accurate determinations and toward repeated case closures and reopenings.³

Additionally, in doing so, it places an additional burden on Kansas families to attempt to correct their eligibility. Research has shown that navigating the system and barriers to getting food assistance are already large and burdensome.⁴ Families trying to work to make ends meet do not always have the time or capacity to constantly fight a system built to keep them from getting the assistance they are eligible for. Further, such barriers have a disproportionate impact on Black, Brown, disabled, and elderly Kansans.

The cost to the state for the new data-matching system would also require substantial upfront investment and ongoing maintenance costs, placing a greater burden on all Kansans, regardless of their economic status. Costs that the state will need to pay for include system design, staff training, vendor contracts, and continual updates to reflect federal SNAP rule changes.⁵

At the same time, Kansas is already facing heightened SNAP administrative costs and federal performance pressures. DCF is working to reduce the state's SNAP payment error rate to avoid benefit cost-sharing penalties under HR 1, while also seeking additional appropriations to manage increased administrative burdens. Introducing a complex automated verification system under these conditions risks increasing procedural errors, raising the state's error rate, and compounding both fiscal and operational strain—ultimately undermining program integrity rather than strengthening it. Kansans will ultimately shoulder the burden of this program under stress.

Section 5 Summary

Prohibition on Exemptions & Geographic Waivers: SB 363 would remove Kansas's ability to provide exemptions for work requirements and geographic waivers, limiting the state's capacity to address the needs of exceptionally impoverished areas in a targeted manner.

Section 5 Impact

This provision undermines the state's ability to look out for Kansans. Under HR 1, states may no longer request exemptions, geographic waivers, or work requirement waivers. Before HR 1, states could request a waiver for counties and municipalities with unemployment rates of at least 10% or in areas where an insufficient number of jobs are available.⁶ Enacting this measure at the state level would be duplicative of federal statute. If the federal government ever reverses this provision of HR 1, Kansas would be prohibiting itself from using a vital tool for reducing food insecurity in economically struggling parts of the state and stimulating those local economies.⁷

Section 6 Summary

Prohibition on the Use of Self-Attestation to Prove Eligibility: DCF would no longer accept people's own statements to prove basic eligibility information like income, where they live, household size, or age, unless federal law requires it. Instead, applicants would have to provide verification before receiving help, adding more paperwork and delays for people seeking assistance.

Prohibition on Tools to Expand Access to SNAP via Flexible Asset and Income Limits and Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility: DCF would be barred from using options that allow more families to qualify for SNAP. The agency could not use higher income limits, flexible asset rules, or broad-based categorical eligibility unless federal law explicitly requires it. This would prevent Kansas from using widely available tools that make SNAP more accessible to working families and households with limited savings.

Prohibition on the Issuance of Work Requirement Waivers: DCF would be prohibited from providing assistance to the most vulnerable Kansans by eliminating work requirement exemptions for caretakers, homeless individuals, veterans, and young adults who aged out of the foster care system.

Groups Subject to Employment & Training Programs: The bill expands employment and training requirements—barriers—for certain Kansans. Combined with other exemptions the bill eliminates, this would result in harm to vulnerable populations in the state.

- Adults ages 18-64 without dependents under the age of 14
- Work registrants ages 50-59 without dependents
- Individuals who are not employed at least 30 hours per week

Section 6 Impact

Banning self-attestation for certain pieces of information targets the most vulnerable Kansans and increases barriers to assistance in an already burdensome process. There is an unfortunately strong association between poverty and access to documentation, such as proof of income, proof of residency, birth certificates, and caretaker relative status. Moreover, this requirement would institute an unreasonable burden for many types of vulnerable groups who depend on SNAP. These groups include individuals experiencing homelessness, individuals without a permanent address (e.g., migrant farmworkers), and mixed-status families.⁸ Rigorous measures are currently in place that enable caseworkers to engage with credible, third-party sources and make confident eligibility determinations. Removing this option will only inflict harm on hungry Kansans.

SB 363 would further entrench Kansas's already restrictive SNAP policies by reinforcing statutory barriers from the HOPE Act that prevent the state from using proven tools to expand food access, such as Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE). Under BBCE, states can raise asset and/or income limits and streamline the application process.⁹ BBCE eliminates the need for multiple financial eligibility checks, reduces administrative costs up to 7% per case, connects more children to free school meals via direct certification, and acts as a gateway for families to get on SNAP and eventually WIC.¹¹ Under Kansas statute, we are already prohibited from utilizing Broad Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE).

Finally, expanding work requirements and mandatory employment and training programs ignores the realities many Kansans face in their daily lives. Research shows that a majority of SNAP recipients are working and that new work requirements have no impact on employment rates.¹² Rather, for those who aren't working, it's because they can't. Most commonly, they are folks who have health conditions, caretaking responsibilities, or other conditions that make work difficult.¹³ The premise of these provisions assumes individuals are choosing not to work, when in fact there is little to no choice at all. Stripping them of their food assistance, however, is a choice SB 363 is making.

SB 363 moves Kansas in the wrong direction by treating administrative discrepancies as fraud, replacing caseworker judgment with rigid automated enforcement, and prioritizing punitive oversight over accurate eligibility determinations. Decades of evidence show that this approach does not improve SNAP integrity. Instead, it increases procedural terminations, administrative churn, and error rates. At a time when DCF is already managing heightened SNAP administrative costs and working to lower the state's error rate to avoid federal benefit cost-sharing penalties, SB 363 would add complexity, expense, and legal risk while making the program less accurate and less accessible for eligible Kansans.

In the end, these administrative burdens will lead to decreased program accuracy, efficiency, and integrity, which will harm our most vulnerable neighbors. There will be more hungry Kansans every day under the provisions of SB 363. Kansans know that when your neighbor is struggling, you help them out, because they will do the same for you when you need it. SB 363 eliminates Kansas's ability to look out for Kansans. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to reject SB 363.

Thank you,

Haley Kottler

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