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Shelley Mann
SNAP Outreach Coordinator
Harvesters—The Community Food Network
SB 95, Testimony for Public Health and Welfare Committee

Chairman Schmidt and members of the Committee:

I am Shelley Mann and I am here today representing Harvesters—The Community Food Network, the regional food bank serving northeast Kansas. Our nonprofit network includes more than 300 charitable organizations providing food assistance to hungry and food insecure children, seniors and adults in 16 Kansas counties.

Harvesters supports SB 95. At a time when 14.2% of Kansans are food insecure and an alarming 21.3% of Kansas children are food insecure, we must improve access to the safety net supports designed to help lift them out of poverty.

I lead the SNAP Outreach Team at Harvesters. Our outreach program and call center assists clients with their SNAP applications. We educate the community about the SNAP program and its requirements, help clients understand the paperwork they receive from the Division of Children and Families, and help them navigate the variety of processes necessary to receive benefits. Since 2012 we have assisted over 2,000 qualifying Kansas families with their initial SNAP applications, provided support and answered countless questions.

It is the mission of our program to make sure that every application we help submit is accurate, complete and ready to be processed immediately by a caseworker. Typically, having the assistance of an advocate improves the accuracy of an application because we can help catch small errors and make sure that all of the necessary documentation is included with the application. This not only saves time for the clients, but also saves time for the caseworkers at DCF, thus saving money for the state.

Recently we spoke with a 77-year-old woman from Alma, Kansas, in Wabaunsee County. The closest DCF office is more than a 30-minute drive away. With limited technology skills, the online application is complicated, and the 26-page paper application is cumbersome and intimidating. Being able to complete and submit her application over the phone through us would make her path to benefits quick and efficient for both her and her caseworker. The current process for assisting clients gets the job done, but is not nearly as efficient as it could be with the help of electronic voice signature.

Harvesters' mission is to feed hungry people today and work to end hunger tomorrow.



Senate Public Health and Welfare

Date 2 7.17

Attachment 2-1

In addition to supporting the telephonic signature provision, we also strongly support returning to the Secretary of DCF the authority to request a waiver from the USDA for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) who are receiving SNAP during times of economic crisis.

ABAWDs who are not meeting certain work requirements receive benefits for just three months within a three-year period. This includes disabled individuals whose disability status is pending, for years in some cases. It includes 18-year-old foster children aging out of foster care without families who only have three months to become self-sufficient. It includes homeless veterans who are making tough decisions between paying for food or saving up to get permanent housing.

The USDA recognizes that employment and economic strength vary greatly throughout the country. Even in relatively good economic times, there may be areas of the country with high unemployment and/or a lack of job opportunities. Regions meeting the USDA's requirements may request a waiver to allow ABAWDs to receive assistance for a longer period of time while they search for work. The waiver was very important for Kansans who had difficulty securing employment during the 2008 recession when job opportunities were scarce.

The waivers are not permanent and the Secretary can rescind them when it is determined they are no longer needed. But to limit the authority of the Secretary to use waivers as a tool in the future ties the hands of the Secretary to respond to the needs of Kansans who are struggling.

We ask for your careful consideration and vote in support of this bill that will help vulnerable Kansans have better access to the nutritious food they need to survive and thrive.

Respectfully submitted,

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