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Senate Health Committee
 February 7, 2017
**SB 95 – Oppose
 SOAR Act**

Chairman Schmidt and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to the SOAR Act, which would impede the ability of women to regain their independence and self-reliance.

Quite frankly, I am stunned this bill was drafted when the Kansas HOPE Act has been so successful, moving individuals from poverty to prosperity through work and self-sufficiency.

- Over 40 thousand new employments were reported for TANF clients from Jan 2011 through October 2016.
- Work requirements helped restore income - income that gave back self-sufficiency.
- The childhood poverty rate decreased from 19 percent in 2012 down to 17 percent in 2015. (KIDS COUNT).
- The number of children in poverty dropped by 12,000.

The SOAR Act, in contrast, would pave the way to generational poverty for Kansas families, and in the process damage women's self-esteem by incentivizing government dependency and by setting low expectations. SOAR would be harmful by repealing many of the positive reforms from the Kansas Hope Act, as it threatens to end some of the work requirements for individuals receiving welfare benefits.

- The SOAR Act strikes language from the HOPE Act that requires child care assistance recipients to be employed 20 hours per week. Removal of the minimum work requirements diminishes the ability to move individuals towards full-time employment, which studies show is the most effective way to lift people out of poverty.
- SOAR would limit the Department of Children and Families' ability to assist families in finding employment by reducing the work participation requirements for women with children under one year old. There is a current 3-month exemption, which is a timeframe common in the private market. However, when SOAR increases that to a one-year exemption, it will encourage dependency on government which can easily turn into generational poverty.
- SOAR eliminates the 24-month time limit for child care assistance and 15-hour work requirement for post-secondary students. Low expectations hurt the dignity of women.

Helping the poor should not be just about helping with immediate needs, but encouraging the poor to help themselves and others. The issue is not whether the poor ought to be helped, rather the question is how do we best accomplish bringing the poor into a situation where they can help themselves. Most poverty exists because of government bureaucracy that encourages dependency. We should want people not to need the government.

Senate Public Health and Welfare

Date 2.7.17

Attachment 28