



KANSAS HEALTH
FOUNDATION

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS & JUVENILE JUSTICE |
HEARING ON HOUSE BILL 2215

TESTIMONY

Teresa Miller, President & CEO

JANUARY 26, 2022

Chairman Stephen Owens and committee members:

Thank you for providing an opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 2215 (HB 2215) – the Kansas Health Foundation (KHF) supports this legislation and believes it is essential to ensuring equitable access to Kansas' Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

KHF understands that food insecurity is a significant problem for Kansas families. According to a study by the Kansas Food Bank, one in eight Kansans faced food insecurity in 2018. This ratio grew to one in six Kansans in 2020. KHF has invested \$11 million in programs to help fill gaps for more than 25 years, including support to food banks and local pantries, Double Up Food Bucks, youth summer meal programs and through addressing food deserts with the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative.

While KHF is proud to support the charitable food network and recognizes the critical role it plays in addressing food insecurity, SNAP is the most important anti-hunger program in the country as it provides 9 meals for every 1 meal provided by a food bank. This 100 percent federally funded program improves the health and wellbeing of Kansans by reducing hunger and serves as a vital tool for ending poverty. Poverty has a negative impact on every aspect of one's health. Criteria that limit or prohibit access to SNAP only elongate systemic dependence and perpetuate poverty.

As the former secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, I was responsible for the oversight and administration of SNAP. I saw both the program's positive impact and its shortcomings firsthand. Most often, the shortcomings were a direct result of policy that either intentionally or unintentionally limited access. I saw firsthand the impact the program had on individuals and families struggling to climb out of poverty. Limiting access to the program is detrimental to the health of individuals and families. I see no reason for our state to turn down federal dollars that address an issue impacting a growing number of Kansans.

It has become painfully obvious that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on communities of color. While limiting access to SNAP has a negative impact on all races, it has a disproportionate impact on Black and Latino/a communities, as they are more likely to be convicted of drug-related crimes, despite clear evidence that White, Black, and Latino/a populations have similar rates of drug use.

At the Kansas Health Foundation, we believe it is both possible and necessary to end hunger in Kansas, and we look forward to working with this committee and all others to do so. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input, and for the time and attention you're giving this important issue.

Teresa D. Miller, President and CEO
Kansas Health Foundation
(316) 262-7676

Background on the Kansas Health Foundation

The Kansas Health Foundation is based in Wichita, but statewide in its focus. With a mission to improve the health of all Kansans, KHF envisions a culture in which every Kansan can make healthy choices where they live, work and play. During the past 35 years, KHF has provided more than \$600 million in grants to improve health in Kansas communities.