



February 6, 2023

Karen Siebert

Advocacy & Public Policy Advisor, Harvesters—The Community Food Network

Kansas Food Bank

Second Harvest Community Food Bank

Opposition to House Bill 2140— Welfare Reform Committee

Chairman Averkamp and members of the Committee:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of Harvesters—The Community Food Network, the Kansas Food Bank and Second Harvest Community Food Bank, which together serve the food insecure in all 105 counties in the state. Last year, our networks of charitable food pantries distributed more than 44 million pounds of food to those in need in Kansas, from our smallest rural communities to major metropolitan areas.

We oppose House Bill 2140 because it places an undue burden on older food insecure Kansans, and on Kansas' network of charitable food pantries.

9.7 % of people in Kansas are food insecure. That's more than 280,000 Kansans—nearly 1 in 10. While the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, known as Food Assistance in Kansas) is a federal program available to help food insecure Kansans, only 70% of Kansans are receiving the benefits for which they are income eligible. This ranks Kansas 45th among the states in SNAP participation rates, at least in part because of the many unnecessary barriers to participation that Kansans already face.

I know other testimony today will focus on the impact this bill would have on older Kansans, who already face age discrimination as they work or search for work in their later years. And I anticipate others will also delineate the challenges faced by low-income workers, no matter their age, who simply don't control the number of hours they work. Particularly in the service industry, where many low-income jobs are clustered, work hours can vary dramatically from week to week, making it difficult to meet these new requirements with one job, or secure a second job to make up the difference.

Today I want to make particular note of the impact this bill would have on Kansas' charitable sector.

Kansas' low SNAP participation rate already has a significant impact on the charitable sector, which is stretched thin. According to *Food Assistance and Hunger in the Heartland 2021*, a study of the charitable food pantries in Kansas and the neighbors they serve, Kansas' community food pantries serve more than

200,000 people every month who need help putting food on the table. While the need has dropped from its record at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, these pantries are still struggling to meet the need as they face decreased donations, food supply chain difficulties, record food inflation and a need among our neighbors that is still well above pre-pandemic levels.

Two-thirds of our network's nonprofit food pantries are run entirely by volunteers, and 61% of those volunteers are over the age of 60. Simply said, we do not have the food, financial or human resources to absorb thousands of additional older Kansans who would be at risk of losing their federally funded SNAP benefits under this bill.

SNAP benefits are funded 100% by the federal government so reducing the number of people on SNAP will not save the state of Kansas any money. This bill will, in fact, cost Kansans. It will require that we add more state administrative staff to monitor the work hours of thousands of additional SNAP recipients and create more employment and training slots for those who aren't able to meet these additional requirements. It will require more charitable donations and volunteer hours to help provide food for our neighbors who lose their SNAP benefits. And it will cost grocers millions of dollars of food sales annually as people lose their ability to purchase food with their SNAP benefits.

This is an unnecessary policy change that will be costly for the state, is harmful to vulnerable working-poor Kansans and will place additional burdens on Kansas' charitable food pantry system. Please vote no on HB 2140.