



# **Testimony in Support of House Bill 2140**

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**Kansas House Committee on Welfare Reform**

February 7, 2022

Steve Greene on behalf of  
Opportunity Solutions Project

Chairman Averkamp, Vice-Chair Howell, and members of the committee,

My name is Steve Greene, and I represent Opportunity Solutions Project (OSP). OSP is a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization dedicated to advancing policies that reduce barriers to work, protect state benefits for the truly needy, and ensure that the government is accountable to taxpayers and citizens.

I am glad to speak in support today of House Bill 2140. As the fiscal note summarizes, HB 2140 would increase the maximum age in the definition of an Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD) from 49 to 59 years of age. ABAWDs between the ages of 18 and 59 would be subject to work participation and/or requirements in order to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

Sensible welfare reform efforts should be aimed at reserving state and federal resources for the truly needy, while focusing on helping Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents move from poverty to self-sufficiency through work requirements or work related training and participation.

It is no surprise to anyone in this Committee or their constituency, that Kansas is faced with a critical work shortage. There are help wanted signs everywhere. Many businesses are modifying store hours due to a shortage of employees. Recently, I went to fill my child's antibiotic prescription at a local pharmacy, only to find they were closed on that day of the week due to "extraordinary labor shortages." I am not alone. One can do a quick internet search to find a multitude of local-news agencies highlighting the growing labor shortage.<sup>1</sup>

According to the most recent U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics there are 97,000 open jobs in Kansas.<sup>2</sup> And there are more than 13,000 able-bodied adults without dependents on food stamps. This bill makes that obvious connection and will move able-bodied people on welfare into some of those open jobs in the state.

How?

By increasing the maximum age of an Able-Bodied Adult without Dependent from 49 years to 59 years of age. The food stamp program has a solid requirement. This in part is a result of the Kansas Legislature's decision to require all ABAWDs 19-49 to participate in a SNAP Employment and Training Program or work 30 hours a week . This means if you are an ABAWD without dependents between 18-49 and are receiving SNAP you have to work, volunteer a few hours a week, or participate in job training or job education, in order to continue receiving food stamp benefits. Again, these are adults with no disabilities, and no kids in the house.

In the short time this program has helped reduce the number of ABWADs receiving SNAP by 7%. This means more adults are finding jobs, receiving important employment training or soft-skill

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cjonline.com/story/business/economy/2022/11/25/kansas-government-help-business-find-workers-jobs-amid-labor-shortage/69665964007/>

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, "State job openings and labor turnover—November 2022," U.S. Department of Labor (2022), [https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/jltst\\_01212022.pdf](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/jltst_01212022.pdf).

development, and moving off of welfare and into self-sufficiency and personal prosperity. This is a good thing.

Expanding the work participation requirement for ABAWDs receiving SNAP from 18-49 to 18-59 years of age will build on the success of DCFs SNAP Employment and Training services program.

Kansas is already funding these programs, which help people by providing work training, career counseling, education, or other resources to help get people back into the workforce. But these programs only work if states assign people to them. HB 2140 will do that.

Making participation mandatory for able-bodied adults to age 59 years old is a great opportunity to connect these individuals with resources that will help them get, and maintain a job. And that's exactly what HB 2140 would do.

Reading the fiscal note, I understand DCF may have some concerns that this bill would conflict with federal regulations, which in turn, could jeopardize future funding. While, that is not the intent of this legislation a balloon amendment would help clarify intent by striking the current changes and inserting:

*(D) The Kansas department for children and families shall assign all individuals subject to the requirements established under 7 U.S.C. § 2015(d)(1) to an employment and training program as defined in 7 U.S.C. § 2015(d)(4). The provisions of this subparagraph shall only apply to:*

*(i) Able-bodied adults aged 18 through 49 without dependents;*

*(ii) Able-bodied **work registrants aged 50 through 59 without dependents;** and*

*(iii) individuals who are not employed at least 30 hours per week.*

Again, this would eliminate any potential conflict with federal regulations while ensuring that ABAWDs between 50-59 would be required to work or participate in work training.

The bottom line is that HB 2140 is a step in helping businesses change their business sign from "closing early" to "open for normal business hours". This will help thousands of Kansas workers on welfare get connected with jobs and their communities. This will, of course, be good for Kansas's economy and taxpayers but the primary benefit is for the workers themselves who can build self-sufficient lives, independent from government dependency. We are proud to support this bill and encourage you to do so as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions at the appropriate time.