



February 1, 2024

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Kansas Action for Children
Verbal neutral testimony for HB 2627
House Committee on Welfare Reform

Chairman Averkamp and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral testimony on HB 2627 which would reorganize KSA 39-709. Kansas Action for Children is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. We work across the political spectrum to improve the lives of Kansas children through bipartisan advocacy, partnership, and information-sharing on key issues, including early learning and education, health, and economic security for families.

KSA 39-709 determines eligibility for the Kansas Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, called Food Assistance in Kansas), Child Care Assistance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid programs.

We all know these programs are complex – it takes a long time for lawmakers, advocates, and administrators to understand them. But previous legislative bodies have furthered that complexity by adopting numerous state-imposed restrictions to these programs' eligibility requirements.

The Committee has heard testimony from real Kansans regarding how difficult it is to understand the eligibility requirements of, apply for, and continually provide the paperwork and information necessary to remain in good standing with these programs. SNAP, Child Care Assistance, TANF, and Medicaid are meant to support the basic needs of our fellow Kansans, but current restrictions mean they are falling short.

Reorganizing this statute isn't going to make much difference for the kids and families who need temporary help when life's challenges become overwhelming. In Kansas, 1 in 8 children

are food insecure¹, 1 in 8 children live below the poverty line², and 1 in 4 children live in households paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing.³

Kansas has some of the most restrictive, burdensome, and punitive eligibility requirements in the country. There are several substantive changes that could be made within this statute to improve the lives of Kansas kids and families. It is disappointing that after learning about the complexity of these programs last session, the Committee isn't making positive changes to improve access to these programs for the greatest benefit of needy Kansans.

I urge you to make proactive changes that remove state-imposed barriers while this statute is opened; KAC would be strongly opposed to any amendments that make it even harder for Kansans to access these programs. If you have any questions for me, please email me at erin@kac.org.

¹ Feeding America (2021). *Food Insecurity among Child (<18 years) Population in Kansas*.
<https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/child/kansas>

² United States Census Bureau (2022). *B05010 – Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months*.
<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT1Y2022.B05010?q=kansas%20Poverty>

³ The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2022). *Children Living in Households with a High Housing Cost Burden in Kansas*.
<https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/7244-children-living-in-households-with-a-high-housing-cost-burden?loc=18&loct=2#detailed/2/18/false/1095,2048,1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868/any/14287,14288>