



March 5, 2025

Haley Kottler, Campaign Director
Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice
Written testimony opposed to SB 85
House Committee on Welfare Reform

Chair Averkamp, Ranking Member Ousley, and Members of the House Committee on Welfare Reform,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I am here in opposition to SB 85, which would direct DCF to enter into agreements with state agencies for the continuous review and comparison of data for public assistance eligibility.

My name is Haley Kottler, I am a campaign director at Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice. Kansas Appleseed is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive and just communities.

Kansas Appleseed has a long history of working to increase food security to all Kansans through SNAP food assistance as well as other public assistance programs. Simply put, we work with Kansans everyday that struggle to navigate our systems for benefits that are meant specifically for them.

Kansas Appleseed opposes SB 85, because it is a costly bill that risks slowing down getting assistance into the hands of those who need it. It also reinforces harmful stereotypes about those applying for assistance.

Oversight is important, but this bill creates unnecessary scrutiny over programs and their participants that already have oversight. DCF has multiple systems against which they cross-check data of applicants to detect potential fraud. Those systems include KEES, Social Security Numbers, citizenship records, and more. The department also uses an identity verification interface and cross checks applications against Kansas systems such as the lottery and Department of Labor. Further, they have a fraud hotline that allows the public to report potential fraud for investigation. If potential fraud is discovered, DCF has a Fraud Investigations Unit to investigate, detect, prevent, and prosecute fraud in public assistance programs. When suspected fraud is discovered, DCF can refer it to the appropriate law enforcement for prosecution.¹

The price tag on this bill for duplicative efforts is inefficient and does not improve program functionalitkkiy. This bill duplicates many of the efforts DCF already has in place, such as monthly cross-checks of earned income, death records, incarceration records, supplemental security income information, and new hire data, making it costly and an inefficient use of state money. To expand the interfaces and practices as required in this bill, would cost the state about \$10.5 million and require 113 new FTE positions.² Considering in 2023 the state found about \$500,000 in fraud payments across all assistance programs (food assistance, TANF, etc.) it administers, the \$10.5 million investment does not even remotely pay for itself or represent a smart investment of state resources.³ In fact, the majority of

¹ DCF General Counsel. "Public Assistance Verification and Fraud Prevention." presented to the House Committee on Welfare Reform, January 2024.

<https://www.dcf.ks.gov/Agency/Testimony/Documents/2024/1.25%20H%20WR%20DCF%20Fraud%20Prevention%20Final.pdf>

² Kansas Division of Budget. Fiscal Note for SB 85. 2025.

https://kslegislature.gov/li/b2025_26/measures/documents/fisc_note_sb85_00_0000.pdf

³ DCF General Counsel. "Public Assistance Verification and Fraud Prevention." presented to the House Committee on Welfare

fraud found in SNAP are retail fraud and skimming schemes that rob those in need of their assistance money.⁴ Increasingly duplicating verification of households and individuals will not help eliminate the true source of fraud in assistance programs.

To target these programs and individuals who use them even more when there are already measures in place and very little fraud to begin with is a waste of state resources and represents an attack on programs that are designed to help Kansans. Kansas already is ranked almost last in the nation for SNAP accessibility and has one of the lowest rates of participation of eligible people.⁵ These additional efforts to investigate and attack individuals receiving assistance and cast doubt on the programs is redundant of existing efforts at best and a tactic to take funds away from Kansans who need them at worst.

Policies like the one proposed in SB 85 are not rooted in improving government efficiency or reducing fraud, but rather reinforce harmful and false narratives about those receiving SNAP assistance. Insisting that those using SNAP are doing so through laziness (e.g. not wanting to work) or deceit (e.g. fraud) only contributes to stereotypes and stigmatization. Research shows that most SNAP recipients are employed and would prefer to not need assistance to feed their families.⁶

The reality of SNAP recipients in Kansas could not be more different than that false narrative. Make no mistake, SNAP spending is high because Kansans need assistance, not because they are fraudsters.

- 384,000 Kansans are food insecure, and every dollar counts at the grocery store for them.⁷
- 154,000 Kansas children live in homes with a family income less than twice the federal poverty level.⁸
- 68% of Kansans who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program are in families with children.⁹
- 12% of households live below the federal poverty level. However, another 27% are households that do not earn enough to afford their basic needs such as housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and taxes.¹⁰ These are Kansans with jobs and families. That means 447,000 Kansas households are struggling to make ends meet and are making difficult decisions everyday on how to get by and provide for their family's needs.¹¹ Of those 447,000 struggling households, only about 20% are receiving food assistance.¹²

Reform, January 2024.

<https://www.dcf.ks.gov/Agency/Testimony/Documents/2024/1.25%20H%20WR%20DCF%20Fraud%20Prevention%20Final.pdf>

⁴ USDA. "The Extent of Trafficking in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: 2015-2017." 2021.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/research/snap/extent-trafficking-2015-2017> and U.S. Government Accountability Office. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Actions Needed to Better Measure and Address Retailer Trafficking."

GAO-19-167. 2019. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-19-167>

⁵ Melton, E. "Qualifying for Food Assistance in Kansas." Kansas Action for Children. 2023.

https://www.kac.org/qualifying_for_food_assistance_in_kansas

⁶ Gaines-Turner, T., Simmons, J. C., and Chilton, M. "Recommendations From SNAP Participants to Improve Wages and End Stigma. American Journal of Public Health. 2019. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6836769/>; Desilver, D. "What the data says about food stamps in the U.S." Pew Research Center. 2023.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/07/19/what-the-data-says-about-food-stamps-in-the-u-s>; Keith-Jennings, B. and Chaudhry, R. "Most Working-Age SNAP Participants Work, But Often in Unstable Jobs." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. 2018. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/most-working-age-snap-participants-work-but-often-in-unstable-jobs>.

⁷ Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap, Kansas. 2022. <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2022/overall/kansas>

⁸ Annie E. Casey Foundation. KIDS Count Data Center.

<https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5048-children-in-low-income-working-families-by-age-group?loc=18&loct=2#detail/d/2/18/false/2048,1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867/34,35,36/11455,11456>

⁹ Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. 2023. https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/snap_factsheet_kansas.pdf

¹⁰ United Way. ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed Kansas Report. 2023.

<https://www.unitedforalice.org/household-budgets/kansas>

¹¹ This is the number of households below the federal poverty level and the number of struggling households combined based on the information found at: United Way. ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed Kansas Report. 2023.

<https://www.unitedforalice.org/household-budgets/kansas>

¹² DCF. Public Assistance Report. 2023. https://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/ees/Documents/CURRENT_PAR_SFYZ2023.pdf

It is time we stop putting hundreds of thousands of Kansans' integrity and hard work on trial. Instead, we should focus on policy solutions that would actually improve the health of Kansans, rather than create expensive and unnecessary barriers with ineffective results.

I urge you to stand against SB 85 and consider policies that strengthen SNAP and therefore the ability of Kansans to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration, I look forward to continuing work with this committee to ensure all Kansans can thrive.

Haley Kottler