



# Testimony in Support of HB 2738

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*Presented to*

**Kansas State Legislature  
House Committee on Welfare Reform**

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Tim Puglisi, *Visiting Fellow*  
FGA Action

Chairman Averkamp, members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of House Bill 2738, a commonsense reform that will ensure Kansas's nutrition assistance programs promote real nutrition—not empty calories.<sup>1</sup>

We are facing a national health crisis, and Kansas is no exception. Obesity, diabetes, and heart disease are robbing Kansans of their quality of life while putting unsustainable strain on state health care programs. This can be seen in state Medicaid costs, in overburdened hospitals, and in the rising number of families suffering from chronic disease.

Yet, despite this crisis, the #1 item purchased with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits is soda.<sup>2</sup> Not milk. Not protein. Not fruits or vegetables.

This bill is not about cutting benefits or telling people what they can and can't eat. It is about bringing SNAP back in line with its original purpose—helping families access real, nourishing food. It is about ensuring taxpayer dollars are used wisely and efficiently.

### **What House Bill 2738 Does**

HB 2738 directs the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) to apply for a federal waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to prohibit the use of SNAP benefits to purchase soda and candy. If denied, DCF must reapply annually until the waiver is granted.

This approach reflects a growing consensus among states that SNAP should better support healthy choices. Nearly 20 states have already received federal approval to restrict the purchase of soda and/or candy with SNAP benefits, including Kansas's neighbors Colorado, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and both Iowa and Nebraska, where these restrictions are already in effect.<sup>3</sup> By pursuing this waiver, Kansas would not be acting alone or experimenting with untested policy, but joining a broader, bipartisan effort to modernize SNAP in ways that promote better health outcomes while preserving the program's core mission of fighting hunger.

### **Why This Bill is Critical for Kansas**

#### **1. Promotes Health and Reduces Long-Term Costs for Chronic Disease**

SNAP has the stated purpose in federal law of providing a nutritious diet to low-income families.<sup>4</sup>

Yet studies reveal that families receiving SNAP benefits often face higher obesity rates and lower diet quality than families at the same income level who are not on the program.<sup>5-8</sup> With 63 percent of Kansas SNAP also enrolled in Medicaid, the state effectively funds nutrition habits that lead to the very chronic diseases treated with Medicaid.<sup>9</sup>

Addressing this cycle helps prevent diet-related diseases, reducing the strain on Medicaid and preserving resources for education, infrastructure, and other critical state needs.

#### **2. Smart Governance = Smart Spending and Better Outcomes**

This committee is tasked with ensuring the welfare programs administered in Kansas provide meaningful and beneficial outcomes for people enrolled in them. Allowing SNAP benefits to be used to buy candy and soda gets in the way of providing meaningful outcomes for the truly needy Kansans on this program.

Kansas already prohibits SNAP funds from being used for alcohol and tobacco—why?<sup>10</sup> Because these programs are meant to serve the public good.

Moreover, the WIC program already follows this model, ensuring that only nutritious foods can be purchased with federal dollars.<sup>11</sup> It works—and Kansas should apply the same principle to SNAP.

Big corporations profit when we allow SNAP dollars to fund soda and candy purchases. PepsiCo and Coca-Cola alone made \$6 billion in food stamp sales in 2016.<sup>12</sup>

### **3. It Encourages Healthier Food Options in Every Community**

Concerns about "food deserts" are important, but the reality is that the landscape of food access is rapidly modernizing and improving. With major retailers like Walmart and Amazon now delivering fresh groceries across Kansas, and local farmers' markets increasingly accepting SNAP, healthy food is becoming more accessible than ever before.<sup>13-14</sup>

Furthermore, this bill helps drive a positive market shift: by increasing demand for nutritious foods, it encourages convenience stores and gas stations—often the only options in food deserts—to stock healthier options, benefiting everyone with limited options nearby.

#### **Bottom Line: Kansas Should Lead on This Issue**

This is not about restricting freedom; it's about ensuring Kansas families on SNAP can eat healthier by prioritizing the purchase of real, whole foods with benefits.

Kansas has an opportunity to join its neighbors and set the standard for smart, responsible public policy. SNAP is a nutrition program—it should actually promote nutrition.

HB 2738 is a win for families on SNAP in Kansas, a win for public health, and a win for common sense. I urge you to support this important legislation.

Thank you, and I welcome any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> Kansas House Bill 2738 (2026), [https://www.kslegislature.gov/li/b2025\\_26/measures/hb2738/](https://www.kslegislature.gov/li/b2025_26/measures/hb2738/).

<sup>2</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, "Foods typically purchased by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households," U.S. Department of Agriculture (2016), <https://www.fns.usda.gov/research/snap/foods-typically-purchased-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap-households/>.

<sup>3</sup> Food and Nutrition Services, "SNAP Food Restriction Waivers," United States Department of Agriculture (2026), <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/waivers/foodrestriction/>.

<sup>4</sup> 7 U.S.C. § 2011

<sup>5</sup> Jerold Mande et al., "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program as a health intervention," *Current Opinion in Pediatrics* (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1097/mop.0000000000001192>.

<sup>6</sup> Cindy W. Leung et al., "Dietary intake and dietary quality of low-income adults in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program," *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (2012), <https://doi.org/10.3945/ajcn.112.040014>.

<sup>7</sup> Binh T. Nguyen et al., "The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Dietary Quality Among US Adults: Findings From a Nationally Representative Survey," *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mayocp.2014.05.010>.

<sup>8</sup> Fang Fang Zhang et al., "Trends and Disparities in Diet Quality Among US Adults by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Status," *JAMA Network Open* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2018.0237>.

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<sup>9</sup> Author's calculations based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce on the number of individuals receiving food stamp benefits, disaggregated by concurrent receipt of other government health benefits. See, e.g., Census Bureau, "Current population survey: Annual social and economic supplement," U.S. Department of Commerce (2024), <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/cps/cps-asec.html/>.

<sup>10</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, "What Can SNAP Buy?" U.S. Department of Agriculture (2024), <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items/>.

<sup>11</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, "WIC food packages - Regulatory requirements for WIC-eligible foods," U.S. Department of Agriculture (2024), <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/food-packages/regulatory-requirements/>.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Paarlberg et al., "Keeping soda in SNAP: Understanding the iron triangle," PubMed Central (2022), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8797053>.

<sup>13</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, "Retailers in your State Accepting SNAP Payments Online," U.S. Department of Agriculture (2024), <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/snap-online-retailers/Kansas/>.

<sup>14</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, "Farmers Markets Accepting SNAP Benefits," U.S. Department of Agriculture (2024), <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items/>.