



January 27, 2025

Testimony In Opposition of Change to Community Eligibility Provision

Chairperson Erickson and Members of Senate Committee on Government Efficiency,

My name is Jennifer Jordan, and I am the Engagement Manager at Flint Hills Breadbasket in Manhattan, Kansas. I have lived in Manhattan and Riley County for 18 years and have developed a deep connection to this community and to Kansas. This is where I am raising my 5-year-old son, Gaius. This is where I've seen both personally and professionally, how school meal access plays in child well-being & education and family stability.

Until my son was three years old, my family relied on public assistance to meet basic needs. During that time, the burden of maintaining eligibility was significant. I spent hours completing applications, submitting documentation, and navigating complex systems while caring for a young child. The fear of making a mistake, of missing paperwork or misunderstanding a requirement, was constant. Programs that reduce these barriers are not conveniences; they are necessities for families, like mine, already under strain.

The Community Eligibility Provision exists because policymakers recognized that repeated income verification and application requirements prevent eligible families from accessing support. CEP reduces administrative workload for school districts, minimizes stigma for students, and ensures consistent access to nutritious meals, regardless of fluctuations in household income or paperwork challenges. These outcomes align with the stated goals of efficiency and effective governance.

Requiring school districts to verify household gross earned income each school year increases administrative costs and places burdens on both families and schools. These requirements disproportionately affect working families, single-parent households, families with language barriers, and those experiencing temporary instability. Hunger does not disappear because documentation is delayed or incomplete.

Additionally, the bill's requirement that school districts obtain legislative approval before participating in the Community Eligibility Provision introduces uncertainty into a system that must operate on predictable school-year timelines. Nutrition access should not depend on legislative session schedules or approval processes. Local school districts are best positioned to assess the needs of their students and communities and should keep the authority to participate in federal programs designed to meet those needs.

Today, because of the support my family received from public programs, schools, and community organizations, I am financially stable and able to contribute meaningfully to my community. That outcome reflects the purpose of these programs: to provide support that allows families to regain stability and move forward.

My son is now in kindergarten and thriving. Like every child in Kansas, he deserves the opportunity to learn in an environment free from hunger and unnecessary barriers to access. Policies that increase administrative hurdles risk undermining student success, family stability, and long-term community outcomes.

Respectfully submitted.

*Jennifer Jordan*

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