



January 22, 2025
Pempho Moyo, Policy Coordinator
Thrive Allen County & Thrive Kansas
Written Testimony in Opposition to ~~26rs2581~~ SB 387 (School Meals)
Senate Committee on Government Efficiency

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to this bill. Thrive Allen County and Thrive Kansas' mission is to ensure that our rural communities have access to the resources they need to improve health outcomes, so that everyone in our communities can thrive. Food access is one of those necessary resources.

The proposed change to students being able to qualify for free school meals, nor the proposal aimed at restricting schools' ability to use the Community Eligibility Provision, are proposals that would increase effectiveness, efficiency, or eliminate unnecessary redundancies. Instead, both proposals would put children's access to food at needless risk. It is well established that when children are hungry, they are not able to focus in class, let alone succeed in the classroom. Outside of the positive impact that free school meals provide students, for many children in Kansas, the breakfast and lunch they receive at school are the most reliable source of nutrition they have. This proposal would negatively impact the education of children across the state. These changes are not centered around advancing children's education or nutrition. Instead, these changes create unneeded paperwork and increase the stigma surrounding children who receive free meals.

It is also vital to assert that Kansas schools already follow federal rules to determine which families are or are not eligible for free or reduced meals. Requiring additional income verification while also reducing schools' ability to use the Community Eligibility Provision does not create an outcome where hypothetical fraud is eliminated. Rather, it creates an environment where Kansas children are not fed.

Decision on how to feed students should reside with the schools and communities that know, support, and care for the children and their families instead of additional legislative approval. Kansas must focus on maintaining and protecting Kansas' children's access to school meals regardless of where they live in the state. I strongly and respectfully urge you to oppose this bill and protect school meals for Kansas students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Pempho Moyo
Policy Coordinator
Thrive Allen County/ Thrive Kansas