



Testimony of Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health
To Senate Committee on Government Efficiency
Written Opponent Testimony for 26rs2581
January 27, 2026

Chairwoman Erickson and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written opponent testimony for 26rs2581 which would impact school meals. Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health (LDCPH) provides public health services to Lawrence and Douglas County residents. Promoting access to healthy foods and reducing food insecurity are essential for creating opportunities in which our community members are able to achieve health and well-being.

We are concerned about this proposal and the unintended consequences it would have. This proposal would create new barriers to free school meals and make it harder for school districts in Douglas County to keep children fed. Additionally, this bill would require additional income verification and limit schools' ability to use the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

Around 14% of residents in Douglas County experience food insecurity on a regular basis, according to Feeding America (2023). When we look at children exclusively, data suggests 16% of children in Douglas County experience food insecurity. We know that the free and reduced meal program provides necessary, nutritious, and reliable meals to children who need it most. This proposal would put more children at risk of becoming food insecure.

School meals help students show up ready to learn, support working families, and reduce hunger. These changes add unnecessary paperwork and administrative burden, increase stigma for students, and shift focus away from education and towards more food insecurity. We hope you will consider how the proposed bill will undermine the efforts of school districts and local communities working to address food insecurity.

Decisions about how to provide meals for students should remain with local schools and communities, rather than requiring additional legislative approval. Kansas can continue to support students and strengthen local economies by protecting access to school meals and fully utilizing available federal nutrition resources.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Smith".

Jonathan Smith, MPH
Executive Director
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