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Written-Only *Opponent* Testimony 26rs2581 (School Meals)

Kristy Baughman, Executive Director of United Community Services of Johnson County

Date: January 23, 2026

Kristy Baughman, Executive Director

United Community Services of Johnson County, Inc.

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Overland Park, KS 66210

Chair Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Government Efficiency:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide **opponent testimony on 26rs2581 (School Meals)** that would impose new restrictions or create additional barriers to free school meals, making it harder for schools to keep kids fed.

United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) is a nonprofit agency that provides data analysis, leads collaborative planning, and mobilizes resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services in Johnson County and the surrounding region. UCS is committed to supporting policies, programs, and services that invest in the success of our community's most vital resource—its people.

By requiring additional income verification and limiting use of the Community Eligibility Provision, this proposal adds unnecessary paperwork, increases stigma for students, and shifts focus away from education and toward bureaucracy. Schools already follow federal eligibility requirements, and the Community Eligibility Provision has proven effective in reducing red tape while ensuring students have consistent access to nutritious meals.

In the 2023–2024 school year, nearly **47.6 percent of Kansas students—about 240,000 children—received free or reduced-price lunches**. Any changes to the current system would impact far too many Kansas students and families.

Decisions about how to feed students should remain with schools and local communities. Kansas should focus on protecting access to school meals and maximizing federal nutrition dollars that support children's well-being and local economies.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to oppose this bill and protect access to school meals for Kansas students.

As part of UCS's 2026 public policy platform, we remain committed to supporting the well-being and self-sufficiency of Johnson County residents and Kansans statewide.