



TO: Senate Committee on Government Efficiency,  
Chairwoman Erikson

Chairwoman Erikson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to this bill. The Food and Farm Council of Riley County and City of Manhattan is an advisory council of local organizations, leaders, and residents working to improve food access, health outcomes, and community well-being in Riley County. We are deeply concerned that this proposal would create new barriers to free school meals and make it harder for schools in your school district to keep kids fed.

Our schools already follow federal rules to determine eligibility and annually communicate our intent to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision with the Kansas Department Education. CEP has been shown to work by reducing red tape while ensuring kids have access to nutritious meals; no changes are needed to the existing process.

USD 383 Manhattan-Ogden Child Nutrition Director has provided the following quote to share with you to help better understand the negative impact this bill would have on Kansas students.

**“From firsthand experience, the Community Eligibility Provision has removed significant barriers for students and families while ensuring children have consistent access to nutritious meals. Without CEP—and under new proposals requiring verification of every application—schools would face a significantly increased burden of verifying eligibility data for every family applying for free or reduced-price meals. At a time when districts are already experiencing critical staffing shortages, this added administrative workload would further strain limited resources. Meanwhile, unpaid meal debt continues to rise as families struggle to navigate an increasingly complex application process. CEP allows schools to focus scarce staff capacity where it belongs: supporting students, not managing paperwork and growing debt.”**

**Stephanie Smith, Child Nutrition Director, Manhattan-Ogden USD 383**

Decisions about how to feed students should be left to schools and communities, not require additional legislative approval. Kansas should be focused on protecting access to school meals and maximizing federal nutrition dollars that support our children and local economies. We respectfully urge you to oppose this bill and protect school meals for Kansas students. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

**Vickie James, RDN, LD, Coordinator**

**Food and Farm Council of Riley County and City of Manhattan**