

Conferee: Katie Warren, President, AFT-Kansas (on behalf of K-12 and higher-ed affiliates statewide)

Contact: president@aftks.org

Bill: SB 387 - School Nutrition Eligibility & CEP Approval

Position: Opponent unless amended (see amendment requests below)

Committee: Senate Committee on Government Efficiency

Date of Hearing: January 27, 2026

Written-Only Testimony of AFT-Kansas

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 387. AFT-Kansas supports **program integrity** and **transparent stewardship** of public dollars. We also know, from daily experience in Kansas schools, that hungry kids don't learn and that administrative red tape can unintentionally push out the very student's school meals are designed to reach.

SB 387 appears to respond to concerns about eligibility accuracy in application-based free meal claims. We take those concerns seriously. But two core provisions of the bill: (1) **mandatory 100% annual income verification** for every application-based free-meal household, and (2) a **legislative/LCC veto over Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)** adoptions, would create large **unfunded administrative burdens**, politicize a federally authorized access tool, and risk **chilling participation among eligible students**, especially those who are non-normative in bureaucratic systems (newcomers, foster youth, students with disabilities, families with language barriers, irregular income, or unstable housing).

What we agree on

- Kansas should **verify smarter**, using evidence-based, risk-targeted verification aligned with federal standards, and make the **math public** so everyone can see how eligibility is determined and corrected.
- Oversight should **improve accuracy without erecting barriers** that reduce access for eligible kids or overwhelm school staff.

What we cannot support as written

1. **100% annual verification of every application-based free-meal household.**
This goes far beyond federal practice (which allows focused or sample-based verification) and would require districts to collect, translate, and securely process sensitive documents from every household each year. Many eligible families will not complete that gauntlet on time, **not because they are ineligible, but because the process is heavy**, especially for families who are non-normative by paperwork standards.
2. **Legislative/LCC pre-approval for CEP.**
CEP is a federal, data-driven option that simplifies administration and reduces stigma in high-poverty schools. Making CEP adoption contingent on a political gate adds

uncertainty and delays for schools that clearly qualify by federal rules, and **keeps districts stuck in paperwork** when a cleaner tool exists.

Why this matters for students, educators, and the state

- **Accuracy without attrition.** Risk-based verification corrects errors while avoiding the mass attrition that 100% checks will cause among time-pressed, language-diverse, or housing-unstable families who are **in fact eligible**.
- **Efficiency for schools.** Office staff and principals are already stretched; imposing a universal paperwork chase will pull time away from instruction, safety, and family engagement.
- **Clean lines between policy and lunch.** CEP is a federal tool designed to reduce red tape and stigma where data justify it. Let's keep that decision **local, data-driven, and administrative**, not subject to shifting political tides.

Closing

AFT-Kansas respectfully asks the Committee to **amend SB 387** so Kansas achieves **integrity with access**: verify smarter, keep CEP approvals local and timely, fund any added administrative work, and protect eligible students, especially those who don't fit neat bureaucratic boxes, from being pushed out by process.

If the bill cannot be amended accordingly, we must oppose it as written.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to Kansas students and schools.

Respectfully submitted,
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