



March 10, 2022

John Wilson, President and CEO
Kansas Action for Children
Opponent Testimony for SB 501
Senate Committee on Public Health and Welfare

Chairman and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 501, a bill that would not only be expensive and burdensome for state agencies, but also harmful to Kansans working to support themselves and raise their children.

Kansas Action for Children is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to make Kansas a place where every child has the opportunity to grow up healthy and thrive. We work across the political spectrum to improve the lives of Kansas children through bipartisan advocacy, partnership, and information-sharing on key issues, including early learning and education, health, and economic security for families.

SB 501 contains numerous provisions that we strongly oppose. This bill:

- Creates new reporting and verification processes that would require rapid and extensive bureaucratic expansion for state agencies.
- Requires multiple state agencies to create new technology systems, practices, and staff positions that will increase costs to the state.
- Enacts new mandates for those Kansans who are facing temporary financial hardship and are trying to get back on their feet and back on the path to self-sufficiency.

SB 501 would make changes to the Kansas Medicaid and food assistance programs. The bill contains several provisions that would increase administrative burden and inefficiencies in state government, at **Kansas taxpayers' expense**. KAC regularly works with social service agencies, community groups, and other nonprofit organizations to understand the complex needs of Kansans, especially those raising children. The clients of these organizations emphasize that the existing barriers to family and work support programs make it difficult to find and maintain employment while focusing on their children's health and happiness. SB 501 does nothing to make programs work for families; instead, it only creates additional barriers.

The Kansas food assistance and Medicaid programs provide supplemental nutrition support and health insurance coverage, respectively. Low-income, working Kansans and their



children must already meet strict eligibility requirements based on household size and family income.^{1 2} These programs have quality control measures in place, and program applicants already face verification and frequent re-certification measures to receive these temporary work and family supports. Food assistance households go through the application, interview, and biannual re-certification process for an average of just \$1.40 per person per meal because their families need that small, temporary boost to get back on their feet.³

SB 501 would require additional, unnecessary verification steps for program participants, which would in turn create burdensome and costly inefficiencies within the agencies that administer them. Food assistance households would be required to report more information, much more frequently, to DCF. They would have to alert case workers of things like an address change, a family member passing away, and small changes in income within only 10 days after the change occurring. Case workers would only have 10 days to adjust those cases in the system. You can see the significant cost of this policy in the fiscal note.

Changes to reporting and verification processes would be especially jarring for families already receiving food assistance and/or Medicaid and who are familiar with current processes. Household characteristics, like whether a child or dependent adult family member lives with someone, would require official verification, and how these things would have to be verified is not defined in the bill. **This means more documentation, bureaucracy, and confusion for both program users and case workers.** When applicants and current participants inevitably have questions about these new and confusing rules, it will further flood KDHE and DCF workers with calls, drop ins, and emails. These changes could also lead to high levels of churn, where participants who still qualify for benefits lose their coverage due to system errors and must reapply for benefits, creating additional costs to the state for processing new applications.

SB 501 would require significantly more participant data monitoring and exchange, even though there are already quality control and data checking processes in place. **This legislation would require KDHE and DCF to engage in monthly and quarterly data sharing and review with each other and four other state agencies to monitor for any information that may affect participant eligibility for Medicaid and food assistance.** This would result in

¹ Kansas Department for Children and Families (2021). *Food Assistance Program Standards*. http://content.dcf.ks.gov/EES/KEESM/Appendix/F-2_FA_Standards.pdf

² KanCare (July 2021). *Kansas Medical Assistance Standards*. <https://kancare.ks.gov/docs/default-source/policies-and-reports/kdhe-keesm/kfmam-policy-memos/e-d-policy-memos/2021-e-d-memos/f-8-ks-medical-standard-7-21-v2.pdf>

³ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (Jan. 6, 2022). *A Quick Guide to SNAP Eligibility and Benefits*. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-quick-guide-to-snap-eligibility-and-benefits>



the purchase of new technology systems, costly computer programming developments, large data extractions, and complex data-matching processes, as well as more than 100 full-time positions to oversee the data extractions and manage massive amounts of sensitive data.

Voting in favor of SB 501 is voting in favor of an unnecessary and expensive expansion of government bureaucracy and inefficiency, which wastes public resources.

The provisions in SB 501 were not written with Kansas families, agencies, or values in mind. This bill would waste millions of Kansas taxpayer dollars each year on bureaucratic rules that would do nothing to help Kansans. **It would add barriers to the food assistance and Medicaid programs, making it harder for the Kansans who face financial hardship to receive the temporary support that they need regain self-sufficiency, find work, and contribute to their communities in the long term.**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our thoughts on why SB 501 would be harmful to Kansas children and families. Please reach out to me for any further questions or ideas at john@kac.org.