



Proponent Testimony SB 488

Kansas Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee

Monday, February 19, 2024

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Chairwoman Gossage, Vice Chair Erickson and members of the Senate Public Welfare Committee

My name is Steve Greene and I am here to offer proponent testimony for SB 488 on behalf of Opportunity Solutions Project. Opportunity Solutions Project (OSP), is a nonprofit organization that advocates for policies that strengthen communities, increase government accountability and improve the lives of individuals by removing barriers to work.

Senate Bill No. 488, which seeks to enhance transparency and accountability within our state's assistance programs. This crucial legislation expands the powers and duties of the Office of Inspector General, empowering it to investigate and audit all state cash, food, and health assistance programs. By strengthening oversight measures, this bill takes significant strides towards preventing fraud, waste, and abuse while ensuring that these vital programs serve those who truly need them.

Senate Bill No. 488 represents a significant step forward in promoting transparency and accountability in our state's welfare system. By expanding the authority of the Office of Inspector General, this legislation will enable more thorough investigations and audits of assistance programs, including Medicaid, MediKan, and the state children's health insurance program. This increased scrutiny will help to identify and rectify any instances of fraud or misuse of taxpayer dollars, ultimately ensuring that these resources are directed towards those who are most in need.

Transparency in government is essential for fostering public trust and confidence in our institutions. As Governor Kelly has stated, "**Transparency is not only a fundamental principle of good governance, but it is also essential for maintaining the public's trust in our democratic process.**" By providing greater transparency through the oversight mechanisms established in Senate Bill No. 488, Kansas demonstrates its commitment to upholding the highest standards of integrity and accountability in administering its welfare programs and serving the citizens of Kansas.

Furthermore, this legislation has the potential to significantly reduce welfare fraud, which not only drains valuable resources from our assistance programs and the truly needy but also undermines the integrity of the entire system. Empowering the Office of Inspector General to conduct thorough investigations and audits, provides another layer of review. This is especially important as public assistance, specifically food assistance fraud is much easier to conduct than many realize.

Providing the Office of Inspector General the ability to receive and investigate allegations of fraud will likely save the State money, while discouraging would-be fraudsters from preying on vulnerable Kansans. Thus SB 488 demonstrates a proactive approach to combating fraud will not only protect taxpayer dollars but also ensure that our assistance programs remain accessible to those who genuinely need support.

Some may argue that welfare fraud isn't really happening. But that opinion is based on the assumption the state agency is aggressively looking for welfare fraud. Most systems are not casting a wide enough net to monitor fraud activity. Such as whole dollar transactions, or purchases of \$700, multiple transactions across state lines, or requests for EBT card replacements over a short period of time.

In conclusion, Senate Bill No. 488 is a critical piece of legislation that will enhance transparency, accountability, and integrity within our state's assistance programs. By expanding the powers of the Office of Inspector General, SB 488 demonstrates a commitment to upholding the public trust and ensuring that taxpayer dollars are used responsibly and efficiently. Thank you for allowing me to testify today and I am happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.