

March 21, 2017

Amanda Gress, Director of Government Relations
Kansas Action for Children
Testimony in Support of Substitute for Substitute for Senate Bill 95
House Health and Human Services Committee

Chairman Hawkins and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Substitute for Substitute for Senate Bill 95. Kansas Action for Children's vision is to make Kansas the best state to raise a child, and our organization shapes health, education, and economic policies that benefit Kansas children and their families. **Strengthening Kansas safety net programs improves the immediate well-being of Kansas children and pays off in the long run.** Allowing families to certify public assistance applications via telephone will help Kansas safety net programs more effectively reach children in need.

Safety net programs improve children's immediate well-being. Cash assistance, food assistance, and child care assistance help Kansas families afford the very basics. When Kansas families work at jobs that don't pay enough to make ends meet, these programs can help bridge the gap between expenses and income to help families – and their children – survive. Substitute for Substitute for Senate Bill 95 will make it quicker and easier for families to apply for assistance via telephone (with the aid of not-for-profit organizations) – reducing the additional time and expense of waiting for the state to process a paper application.

Safety net programs don't just help Kansas families get by – they help them get ahead. Research clearly shows that children who benefit from safety net services do better in school, are healthier, and are more likely to succeed when they grow up. For example, studies prove that low-income pregnant mothers who receive food assistance are more likely to give birth to healthy babies, and children who receive food assistance are more likely to be healthy as well. Participating in the food assistance program has been shown to improve children's math and reading skills, and children who receive food assistance are more likely to graduate from high school. Long-term, children who receive food assistance are more economically self-sufficient as adults. Making sure that eligible Kansas families can apply for food assistance quickly and efficiently is a commonsense way to help their children succeed in school and build a strong future.

For these reasons, we encourage the Committee to support Substitute for Substitute for Senate Bill 95 to strengthen the Kansas safety net. This legislation is an opportunity to more effectively connect Kansas children to programs that help them grow and thrive. As you work to serve Kansas children in need, please do not hesitate to contact Kansas Action for Children by emailing me (amanda@kac.org) if we can answer questions or otherwise be of assistance.



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