



**Testimony of the Kansas Public Health Association to the
Kansas House Committee on Children and Seniors
Proponent for HB 2371 • February 22, 2021**

Chairwoman Concannon and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 2371 which simplifies the process to assure Kansas children have access to food and child care. The changes outlined in HB 2371 will better align state mandates with federal requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and child care subsidy. This alignment will bring clarity to those seeking assistance and to those assisting Kansans in accessing these needed services. Additionally, as we collectively work to bolster the state's economy post pandemic, Kansas businesses will need access to individuals with a diverse set of skills. HB 2371 exempts adult students enrolled in a public or private elementary or secondary school or postsecondary educational institution from the work requirements for child care subsidy allowing them to focus on completing their education. And the bill removes all requirements imposed on adults pursuing postsecondary education for childcare assistance, most notably the 24 month lifetime limit and the restrictions on both caregivers participating in school. Education at all levels is tied to better health. Adults with higher educational attainment live longer healthier lives.ⁱ HB2371 gives Kansans who already face considerable barriers in life a more straightforward path to success.

Research has repeatedly shown that SNAP is good for health! In December of 2019, the *American Journal of Public Health* published a collection of in depth articles exploring the connection between SNAP and the health of the public. The overall findings across the multitude of studies reviewed indicated that SNAP is demonstrably effective in reducing hunger, food insecurity, and poverty.ⁱⁱ SNAP is a critical tool to help lift Kansas families out of poverty. Diluting SNAP or creating barriers to accessing these services simply displaces the need and shifts the financial implications to other systems. According to the prestigious journal *Health Affairs*, the loss of absence of SNAP benefits can have significant health impacts. The economic hardships these families face can take a serious toll on child and caregiver health, including through high levels of stress, inadequate nutrition, and compromised immune systems, leading to increased strain on the healthcare system. ⁱⁱⁱ

We encourage the Committee to support HB 2371 as a straightforward strategy to improve the health of low-income children and adults.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brandon Skidmore, President
Kansas Public Health Association

KPHA is a professional association for Kansas public health practitioners, professionals, and advocates. As a voice for public health, KPHA provides a forum for individuals and organizations to work collectively to assure conditions in which Kansans' lives will be healthy. (*This position reflects the collective position of association members through the action of the Board of Directors and may not necessarily reflect the views of each KPHA member's employer.*)

ⁱ Zajacova, A., & Lawrence, E. M. (2018). The Relationship Between Education and Health: Reducing Disparities Through a Contextual Approach. *Annual review of public health*, 39, 273–289. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-031816-044628>

ⁱⁱ Marion Nestle, "The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): History, Politics, and Public Health Implications", *American Journal of Public Health* 109, no. 12 (December 1, 2019): pp. 1631-1635. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305361>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ettinger de Cuba, S., Chilton, M., Bovell-Ammon, A., Knowles, M., Coleman, S. M., Black, M. M., Frank, D. A. (2019). Loss of snap is associated with food insecurity and poor health in working families with young children. *Health Affairs*, 38(5), 765-773. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05265