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Written Testimony - Opponent  
House Bill 2141  
House Committee on Welfare Reform  
February 9, 2023

Chairman Averkamp, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition of House Bill 2141.

Kansas NEA believes there is a strong correlation between poverty and lack of achievement in education. Educators know that when a child comes to school hungry, it is difficult for them to learn. We also know that barriers for parents are barriers for children. As such, we support efforts that work to combat the effects of poverty, including access to food assistance programs. Additionally, we believe that legislation passed by the Kansas Legislature should truly reflect Kansas values. As such we oppose any effort to create barriers to receiving food assistance.

The changes proposed in House Bill 2141 fail to recognize that parents can make informal support agreements that do not involve Child Support Services. It also fails to recognize that some parents forego making any support agreements out of concern for their safety and their children's safety. Further, it fails to recognize that sometimes Kansas parents face temporarily difficult circumstances outside of their control.

It would also substantially increase administrative expenses, and these expenses are the only state dollars used to run the food assistance program. These are state funds that could otherwise be used for programs that could benefit Kansans rather than going towards the implementation of a burdensome and punitive bill.

In short, House Bill 2141 would make it less likely that parents can support their children and more likely that their children go hungry, and they struggle to learn because they are hungry. Kansas NEA believes that no child should struggle to learn because their bellies are empty.

We urge the committee to reject House Bill 2141.