

Oppose New Expensive Mandates on State Agencies (HB 1270)

HB 1270 would require the Oklahoma Health Care Authority and Department of Human Services to create redundant administrative burdens for SoonerCare (Medicaid) and SNAP (food stamps), the two largest safety net programs that serve hundreds of thousands of Oklahomans, mostly children, parents, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. This presents a number of concerns:

HB 1270 is cookie-cutter language drafted by a national lobbying group that doesn't reflect Oklahoma needs.

- The language of HB 1270 is taken virtually word-for-word from model language proposed by the Foundation for Governmental Accountability (FGA). The Foundation for Government Accountability is a Florida-based organization providing cookie-cutter legislation to dozens of states, regardless of the real circumstances on the ground.
- Versions of this bill have surfaced in a number of states, including Kansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, and more.

HB 1270 is a solution in search of a problem.

- There's no evidence of widespread abuse or fraud in SNAP or SoonerCare, and their respective agencies already implement rigorous verification and fraud investigation processes.
- SNAP error rates have fallen steadily for more than a decade, and our improper payments rate for Medicaid is very low.

HB 1270 would impose an unfunded mandate on overburdened and underfunded agencies.

- Simply put, this would be expensive to enforce – and it's unnecessary. Federal agencies require states to adhere to a strict verification process and audit states regularly.
- Our state agencies simply don't have the workforce to conduct the intensive quarterly verification HB 1270 would require.
 - DHS estimates they would need to hire 500-600 additional workers at a cost of \$10.5-11.5 million annually
- Due to budget cuts, DHS has shed hundreds of jobs and needs some \$40 million in supplemental appropriations to make it through the current fiscal year.
- Oklahoma already requires SNAP households to be recertified every six months.

HB 1270 would limit state flexibility in administering federal programs.

- By limiting categorical eligibility for SNAP, HB 1270 would limit the agency's ability to implement the program in ways that best responds to our state's needs and ensures vulnerable Oklahomans have access to needed food.
- Eliminating categorical eligibility disincentivizes building equity and saving for the future among SNAP members. All but 10 states use categorical eligibility to help vulnerable families access food assistance.

HB 1270 will put barriers between low-income families and the aid they need.

- Use of independent vendors and quarterly recertifications can produce false or out-of-date results that could yank health care or food assistance away from families that qualify for them honestly. We should not be putting more barriers in the path to prosperity for low-income Oklahoma families.

- This will create more work for the state workers that have to resolve errors and reinstate families improperly cut from health care and food assistance.