



Testimony of Poe Dee, CSS Director of Refugee and Immigrant Services, to the Health and Human Services Committee regarding LB843 — *Require the Department of Health and Human Services to file a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program waiver for refugees and immigrants*

I am here to express my strong support for the proposed bill, LB843 regarding SNAP eligibility for immigrants. Since the early 1990s, Catholic Social Services (CSS) has a long history of welcoming those seeking protection. From 2021 to 2025 alone, we welcomed over 900 individuals, including refugees, asylees, and humanitarian parolees.

As a former refugee who has worked with this population since 2009, I understand their needs deeply. Refugees come here because they have no protection at home due to war and violence. Like all of us, they seek a better life and the opportunity to raise their children in safety.

The "One Big Bill" has restricted SNAP eligibility for lawfully present families, causing immense hardship. These families are particularly vulnerable during their first few years in the U.S. as they adjust to a new culture and work to become self-sufficient.

I see the impact of these restrictions daily. For example, a family of eight from Sudan, whom we welcomed in 2024, recently lost their SNAP benefits. The father works in Omaha to support them, but with rent at \$1,795 and no vehicle, the loss of food assistance is devastating. When I visited them recently, the mother shared that her children often only eat at school because there is not enough food at home. Another refugee family from Iraq faced a similar crisis after a layoff coincided with the loss of SNAP benefits, leaving them unable to afford rent or groceries until CSS intervened with emergency assistance.

While CSS and local parishes do everything possible, the need is greater than what non-profits and the private sector can manage alone. Federal and state support through SNAP is essential.

These individuals have already given up everything—their homes, families, and culture. They should not have to face starvation here. They are our neighbors; they work, pay taxes, and their children attend school with ours. When they have a need, we have an obligation to help.

Thank you for your time and for considering this important matter.