



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2355		DATE: 2/19/2026	
COMMITTEE: Health and Mental Health			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: ADAM SAUNDERS		PHONE NUMBER: 573-356-9392	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: COLUMBIA CENTERS FOR URBAN AGRICULTURE		TITLE: CO-FOUNDER	
ADDRESS: 212 HIRTH AVE			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65203
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: AMANDA BERRY		PHONE NUMBER: 417-349-5212	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: EMPOWER MISSOURI		TITLE: FOOD SECURITY POLICY MANAGER	
ADDRESS: 612 S LIPSCOMB DR			
CITY: REPUBLIC		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65738
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: AMY C. BOLLAM		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 3:48 PM	
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Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amy Bollam. I am a Registered Dietitian, a healthcare leader, and a Missouri resident. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2355.

I want to begin with the most important point: Food Is Medicine is prevention. And prevention costs less than treatment.

Missouri is facing rising healthcare costs driven largely by preventable, diet-related diseases. We know that hospital stays, emergency visits, and long-term complications are among the most expensive components of our healthcare system. When we prevent disease progression through access to medically appropriate nutrition, we avoid those costs before they occur.

The data in Missouri is compelling:

- A Missouri pilot program to prevent low birthweight births projected \$5.3 million in annual savings in St. Louis City alone.
- Produce prescription programs for individuals with diabetes are projected to generate over \$100 million in net healthcare savings in Missouri over 10 years.
- Medically tailored meals are projected to save \$2,562 per patient per year.

These savings come from avoiding the most expensive care — hospitalizations, emergency department visits, and long-term complications.

Put simply: Food Is Medicine reduces costs by keeping people healthier and out of the hospital.

This matters deeply in Missouri. Our state has high rates of diet-related disease that drive healthcare spending. Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in Missouri and one of the most expensive conditions to treat. Limited access to healthy food is consistently linked to higher hospital utilization and higher overall medical costs.

If we reduce diet-related illness, we reduce taxpayer spending.

HB 2355 also recognizes something uniquely powerful: healthcare dollars can support Missouri agriculture.

The bill prioritizes local growers and community organizations when feasible. That creates a stable, healthcare-backed market for Missouri farmers. Stable purchasing allows farms to plan and grow, food businesses to expand, and supply chains to strengthen.

Every \$1 spent on locally produced food generates between \$1.32 and \$1.90 in local economic activity. That means more jobs, more small business growth, and greater rural economic stability.

Stable demand creates stable businesses.

It is also important to emphasize that this proposal is fiscally responsible. This is not a permanent entitlement. It is a time-limited federal waiver designed to test what works. The goal is not to grow government — it is to reduce long-term healthcare spending through evidence-based prevention.

As a Registered Dietitian, I see firsthand how access to appropriate nutrition changes health trajectories. As a Missourian, I believe we should invest in solutions that both improve health and strengthen our state's economy.

Food Is Medicine is prevention that saves money, keeps Missourians healthy, and supports Missouri farmers at the same time.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully ask for your support of HB 2355.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: BILLY POLANSKY		PHONE NUMBER: 573-514-4174	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: COLUMBIA CENTER FOR URBAN AGRICULTURE		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 1769 W ASH			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65203
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: CORRINA SMITH		PHONE NUMBER: 573-823-6889	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: COLUMBIA FARMERS MARKET		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 1769 W. ASH STREET			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65203
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: DESI BRISCO		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 5:28 PM
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To the Honorable Members of the Missouri General Assembly,
 ?Missouri is at a health crossroads. For decades, the "Standard American Diet"—characterized by high intake of processed sugars, refined grains, and excessive animal fats—has fueled a quiet but deadly epidemic of chronic disease across our state. As citizens, we are seeing the direct link between what we eat and the rising rates of hypertension (high blood pressure), Type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.
 ?The science is clear: food is more than just fuel; it is a primary intervention for health. Yet, for many Missourians, the healthiest choice is the hardest to afford.
 ?The Impact of the American Diet on Missourians
 ?The prevalence of chronic illness in Missouri is largely driven by nutritional gaps. High consumption of saturated animal fats and sodium is a leading contributor to arterial plaque and high blood pressure. These underlying conditions do not just diminish the quality of life; they place an enormous financial burden on our state's healthcare system, specifically MO HealthNet.
 ?A New Vision: HB 2355 and the Section 1115 Waiver
 ?We strongly advocate for the passage and implementation of House Bill 2355. This legislation establishes the "Food is Medicine Act," which directs the Department of Social Services to seek a federal waiver to provide nutritional services as a covered medical benefit.
 ?By allowing doctors to "prescribe" healthy food, Missouri can:
 ?Empower Patients: Give Missourians the tools to manage diabetes and heart disease through fresh produce and whole foods rather than relying solely on lifelong medication.
 ?Support Local Growers: The bill prioritizes the inclusion of Missouri's own local farmers and community-based organizations, keeping our healthcare dollars within our state's economy.
 ?Reduce Long-term Costs: Investing in nutrition now prevents expensive emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and long-term disability later.
 ?The Benefit to "We the People"
 ?The option to have a healthcare provider prescribe a tailored, healthy diet—and the means to access that food through grocery provisions or pantry stocking—is a common-sense solution. It shifts our focus from "sick care" to true healthcare.
 ?We urge the Missouri state government to recognize that a healthy Missouri begins on the dinner plate. Supporting HB 2355 is a commitment to the longevity, productivity, and well-being of every citizen in this state.
 Thank you
 Reverend Desi Brisco



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: DONNA MARTIN		PHONE NUMBER: 816-701-7369	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MID AMERICA REGIONAL COUNCIL		TITLE: PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAM MANAGER	
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CITY: KANSAS CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64105
EMAIL: dmartin@marc.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 8:50 PM	

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Mid-America Regional Council supports HB 2355 as an important step to connecting more people with healthy food, nutrition education and other services they need for better health outcomes.

HB 2355 (the “Food is Medicine Act”) directs the department of social services to seek a Section 1115 demonstration waiver for a “Food Is Medicine” program which would provide nutrition support services paid for through the MO HealthNet program. The nutrition support services covered by this initiative may include, but not be limited to:

1. Case management
2. Nutrition counseling
3. Meals or pantry stocking
4. Nutrition prescriptions; and
5. Grocery provisions

Nutrition support programs and services are being implemented across Missouri. The reach of these programs and services could be much greater with a Section 1115 waiver. A waiver would improve the ability of health providers to connect patients with these nutrition support programs and services. The waiver would allow the services to expand to meet the needs of more people who may not currently be served. When people have access to healthy food and education/counseling to address or prevent health issues, evidence shows that their health improves, and costly medical expenses can be avoided.

In addition, this legislation encourages nutrition support services to connect with locally produced food. This inclusion will allow local growers to be engaged with providing healthy food to patients and could encourage more farmers to grow specialty crops in Missouri and surrounding states. It will allow the growers to have more certainty when they plan and grow/raise their products.

KC Fresh Rx is an example of a produce prescription program operating in Missouri that could be improved with a Section 1115 waiver for a “Food Is Medicine” program. KC Fresh Rx is a program for people who have Medicaid for their health insurance. Patients are referred to the program by their health care provider if they

1. have experienced food insecurity in the last year; and
2. have been identified as being pre-diabetic, diabetic, pre-hypertensive, and/or hypertensive.

When patients are referred to the program, they receive 6 months of nutrition education and a financial incentive that can only be used for fresh produce at participating grocery stores. Over the past three years, the results of the program have included reduced blood sugar and blood pressure levels, reduced food insecurity, increased consumption of fruit and vegetables, and a 91% redemption of the incentive provided to participants.

Barriers for increasing the impact of the KC Fresh Rx program include limited funding to support more participants and also incorporating the program into the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) systems that providers use so that the referral process aligns with other types of referrals providers make. A “Food Is Medicine” program allowing referrals to be made to programs like KC Health Rx through MO HealthNet, would address both of these barriers.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: EMMA		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: HEALTH FORWARD FOUNDATION		TITLE: IMPACT STRATEGIST - POLICY	
ADDRESS: 2300 MAIN ST, #304			
CITY: KANSAS CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64108
EMAIL: eshankland@healthforward.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 10:12 PM	
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Chair Stinnett and Members of the House Health and Mental Health Committee:

On behalf of the Health Forward Foundation (Health Forward), I submit this testimony in support of House Bill 2355, which would establish the “Food is Medicine Act” and require the Department to apply for a Section 1115 demonstration waiver to implement a Food is Medicine program through MO HealthNet. Health Forward is a public health foundation committed to strengthening communities by advancing equitable access to health care and improving health outcomes. Implementing a Food is Medicine program in MO HealthNet represents an evidence-based strategy to improve health outcomes, reduce health care costs, and strengthen Missouri’s economy.

HB 2355 would authorize the Department to design a Food is Medicine pilot program tailored to Missouri’s needs. This could include medically tailored meals and food packages to help manage chronic and diet-related conditions, as well as produce prescription programs prescribed by health care providers (1). Chronic diseases remain a primary driver of health care spending. According to the American Heart Association, the United States spends approximately \$4 trillion annually on health care, much of it related to chronic and diet-related conditions (2). Research shows that Food is Medicine interventions can reduce hospitalizations and overall health care utilization, generating cost savings for the Medicaid program over time (3). In addition, HB 2355 prioritizes partnerships with community-based organizations and local growers, strengthening local food systems and supporting economic development across Missouri.

Access to nutritious food is foundational to good health. A healthy diet is associated with lower risk of obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers. Yet many rural communities and communities of color face persistent structural barriers to healthy food access, including long travel distances to grocery stores, limited transportation options, and higher relative food costs. As a result, rural Missourians experience higher rates of chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, coronary heart disease, and cancer. Communities of color also experience disproportionately high rates of diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease, and are more likely to develop long-term chronic conditions (4,5).

Food is Medicine programs can directly address these inequities by providing clinically appropriate, culturally responsive nutrition interventions. Medically tailored meals, food packages, and produce prescriptions are designed by health care providers using established nutrition standards to meet

dietary guidelines for specific health conditions (6). By integrating nutrition into health care delivery, Missouri can better manage chronic disease, improve quality of life for MO HealthNet participants, and advance health equity statewide (7).

Health Forward respectfully ask Members of the Committee to vote yes on HB 2355 to establish a Food is Medicine program within MO HealthNet. Please contact eshankland@healthforward.org if you have any questions or would like additional resources. Our Food is Medicine policy brief can be accessed at <https://healthforward.canto.com/b/NF8MK>.

Sincerely,
Emma Shankland
Impact Strategist – Policy
Health Forward Foundation

(1) UTHealth Houston School of Public Health. (2025). Food as medicine. Dell Medical School, The University of Texas at Austin. <https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/dell/legislative-initiatives/tx-rpc-project-reports/food/Food%20as%20Medicine.pdf> [sph.uth.edu].

(2) Volpp, K. G., Berkowitz, S. A., Sharma, S. V., Anderson, C. A. M., Brewer, L. C., Elkind, M. S. V., Gardner, C. D., Gervis, J. E., Harrington, R. A., Herrero, M., Lichtenstein, A. H., McClellan, M., Muse, J., Roberto, C. A., & Zachariah, J. P., on behalf of the American Heart Association. (2023). Food is medicine: A presidential advisory from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*, 148(18), 1417–1439. <https://doi.org/10.1161/CIR.0000000000001182>.

(3) Klatell, D. (2023, October 30). Food is medicine enhances health while slashing health care costs. The Rockefeller Foundation. <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/perspective/food-is-medicine-enhances-health-while-slashing-health-care-costs/>.

(4) Klatell, D. (2023, October 30). Food is medicine enhances health while slashing health care costs. The Rockefeller Foundation. <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/perspective/food-is-medicine-enhances-health-while-slashing-health-care-costs/>.

(5) BJC HealthCare. (2024, July 30). African Americans have a higher risk of being diagnosed with these three chronic illnesses. <https://www.bjc.org/news/african-americans-have-higher-risk-being-diagnosed-these-three-chronic-illnesses>.

(6) Food Is Medicine Coalition, & Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. (2024). Implementation considerations for medically tailored meals: Follow up to CMS and CMMI. <https://fimcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/FIMC-Tufts-FollowUpCMS-CMMI-Final.pdf>.

(7) Food Is Medicine Coalition. (2025). FIMC research info sheet 2025: Medically tailored meals—the proof. <https://fimcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/FIMC-Research-Info-Sheet-2025.pdf>.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: ERIC SCOTT		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 5:07 PM
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Dear Legislators,

I am writing as a resident of North St. Louis County, Missouri House District 4, and zip code 63138, to express my strong support for the Food Is Medicine Act — Senate Bill 1075 and House Bill 2355. This legislation is critically important for communities like mine, where access to healthy, nutritious food is directly tied to health outcomes and quality of life.

In District 4, many neighborhoods are surrounded by fast-food restaurants and convenience stores that primarily offer cheap, heavily processed foods. Grocery stores with fresh produce, whole grains, and organic options are often difficult to access due to distance, cost and disinvestment. This is not a lack of desire to eat healthy — it is a systemic issue of food and nutrition insecurity.

Despite these challenges, our community has also seen what is possible when access to healthy food is prioritized. One powerful example is the work of Rustic Roots Sanctuary, a local organization that has become a trusted source of nourishment, education, and dignity for our neighbors. Through their weekly farmers market, Senior and Expectant Families programs Rustic Roots Sanctuary serves hundreds of families every year, providing fresh, locally grown food free or at very low cost. For many residents, this market is one of the only reliable sources of organic fresh produce in the area.

The impact of Rustic Roots Sanctuary goes far beyond food access. Their work demonstrates how local, organic, and community-based food systems can improve health, strengthen neighborhoods, and restore connection between people and the food they eat. They are a living example of what “Food Is Medicine” looks like on the ground — prevention, empowerment, and care rooted in community.

Unfortunately, not every neighborhood has access to resources like Rustic Roots Sanctuary. That is why statewide policy matters.

Communities like mine experience disproportionately high rates of diet-related chronic conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and obesity. These conditions place an enormous burden on families, healthcare systems, and the state of Missouri. Preventive, nutrition-based solutions are urgently needed.

Food Is Medicine programs have already demonstrated documented health improvements in Missouri and nearby regions. Programs such as FoodFARMacy have shown that when participants receive consistent access to nutritious foods alongside nutrition education, they experience increased food

security, fewer emergency room visits, and improved clinical outcomes such as reduced A1C levels.

(Source: Access Health News – “One Year Later: FoodFARMacy Shows Sustained Health Improvements and High Retention Rates”
<https://accesshealthnews.net/one-year-later-foodfarmacy-shows-sustained-health-improvements-and-high-retention-rates/>)

Similarly, Food Is Medicine pilot programs in Kansas City have documented reductions in A1C levels and systolic blood pressure among participants within six months of receiving medically tailored groceries and nutrition support.

(Source: The Beacon – “Food Is Medicine Programs in Kansas City Give Patients Fresh, Healthy Food Options”
<https://thebeaconnews.org/stories/2025/12/02/food-is-medicine-programs-in-kansas-city-give-patients-fresh-healthy-food-options/>)

The Food Is Medicine Act would allow Missouri to formally integrate nutrition into healthcare by recognizing food as a powerful tool for disease prevention and management. For communities like those in North St. Louis County, this means fewer emergency room visits, improved chronic disease management, and better quality of life for families.

Importantly, this legislation would also strengthen local food systems by prioritizing partnerships with community-based organizations, local farmers, and food producers — allowing organizations like Rustic Roots Sanctuary to expand their reach and impact. By emphasizing locally sourced and organic foods, Missouri can support its agricultural economy while improving public health.

Food is not a luxury — it is medicine. Passing SB 1075 and HB 2355 would acknowledge what communities like mine have known for years: access to healthy food saves lives.

I respectfully urge you to support the Food Is Medicine Act and invest in a healthier, more equitable future for all Missourians.

Sincerely,

****Eric Scott ****
St. Louis, Missouri
Missouri House District 4



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: ERICA WILLIAMS		PHONE NUMBER: 314-598-1939	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: A RED CIRCLE		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
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CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63136
EMAIL: info@aredcircle.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 8:59 AM	

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Nutrition is the foundation of good health. When neighborhoods are saturated with unhealthy choices, people must travel far to access food that is nutrient dense. If they can use a voucher, that would offset expenses related to travel. In addition, A Red Circle operates a farmers market between May and November while our grocery store building is being renovated, and this location will offer a distribution site where consumers can also use the vouchers.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: GARRETT WEBB		PHONE NUMBER:	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS		TITLE: REGISTERED LOBBYIST	
ADDRESS: PO BOX 1219			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65102
EMAIL: webb@coestrategies.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 12:42 PM	
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The Missouri Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, representing 1,100 physicians, trainees, and pediatric-provider members strongly supports the inclusion of nutritional counseling, obesity management, and healthy food options as part of routine care. Ensuring children have access to nutritious and appropriate food options as well as the ability to receive nutritional counseling services is an important tool in the growth and development as they grow.



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WITNESS NAME		
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:		
WITNESS NAME: JANETT LEWIS		PHONE NUMBER: 858-717-0070
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: RUSTIC ROOTS SANCTUARY CO		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ADDRESS: 11735 ECKERT LANE		
CITY: ST LOUIS	STATE: MO	ZIP: 63138
EMAIL: rusticrootssanctuary@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 3:34 PM

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As a Missouri farmer, I've spent years growing food that nourishes our communities. But I've watched too many neighbors struggle with diabetes, obesity, and other diet-related illnesses, conditions that better access to healthy food could help prevent or manage.

That's why I support the Food is Medicine Act. This isn't about expanding government programs; it's about reducing healthcare costs by testing whether nutrition-based care through Medicaid can keep people out of hospitals.

The numbers tell the story. Missouri spends approximately \$1 billion annually on avoidable healthcare costs linked to limited food access. About 600,000 Missourians have diabetes, and over a third of our adults are obese. These conditions drive expensive emergency room visits and hospitalizations that we're already paying for through Medicaid.

National evidence shows that when nutrition becomes part of healthcare, hospitalizations drop by 23% and ER visits by 13%. A Missouri Fresh Rx pilot in St. Louis proved this works locally, projecting \$5.3 million in annual Medicaid savings while reducing low-birthweight births.

For farmers like me, this creates healthcare-backed demand for fresh, healthy food, supporting local agriculture and keeping dollars in Missouri communities.

Prevention costs less than treatment. The Food is Medicine Act gives Missouri a practical way to lower healthcare costs while strengthening our local food economy.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: JEAN HOWARD		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 9:48 AM
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HB 2355 will save Missouri taxpayers money through assisting people to manage their health effectively through food choices before they incur continuous and escalating medical costs. It will improve the health of Missourians, reduce low-birthweight births, decrease emergency room visits, and help farmers by prioritizing the inclusion of local farmers.



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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: JESSICA PETRIE		PHONE NUMBER: 573-635-6092
REPRESENTING: BJC HEALTHCARE, FEEDING MISSOURI		TITLE:
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		ZIP: 65102
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: JORDAN MIZE		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 2:22 PM
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My name is Jordan Mize. I am an Associate Professor at Cox College, a Registered Dietitian in Missouri, and a doctoral candidate researching food insecurity. I am writing in support of House Bill 2355, The Food is Medicine Act.

In my professional experience, nutrition is central to the prevention and management of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. However, many patients are advised to “eat better” without having reliable access to healthy food or the nutrition counseling needed to make meaningful changes. This gap limits the effectiveness of medical care and contributes to preventable health complications.

HB 2355 recognizes food as a powerful and evidence-based tool for improving health outcomes. Food Is Medicine programs, including medically tailored meals, produce prescriptions, and medically tailored groceries, can improve disease management, reduce hospitalizations, and lower healthcare costs. These interventions are most effective when paired with individualized nutrition counseling by a Registered Dietitian that considers a patient’s medical history, resources, and lived experience. I respectfully urge you to support HB 2355 and advance the Food Is Medicine Act in Missouri.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2355		DATE: 2/19/2026	
COMMITTEE: Health and Mental Health			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KATIE DAVENPORT-KABONIC, DO		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 10:12 PM	

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As a dually board certified physician in both Family Medicine and Lifestyle Medicine, I have witnessed first hand the immensely positive impact Food Is Medicine (FIM) interventions have had in the management of nutrition-related chronic diseases, specifically in patients with Medicaid coverage in an urban family medicine clinic. In partnership with Springfield Community Gardens (SCG), myself and other family medicine physicians collaborated to create a multi-dimensional FIM initiative called "Health Scripts" which included access to nutrition counseling, locally grown fresh produce prescriptions and grocery provisions for participating patients.

Many Health Scripts participants with diabetes, hypertension, and obesity experienced improvements in their blood sugar, blood pressure, weight, chronic pain, and even mood with consistent access to and inclusion of nutrient-dense, locally grown vegetables and fruits in their chronic disease management plans. Health markers improved and prescription medication use reduced. With nutrition counseling, patients became more engaged in their chronic disease management as they incorporated an increasing amount, frequency, and variety of vegetables and fruits in their diets. It was an unbelievable joy and inspiration to witness as a primary care physician.

In addition to these positive medical impacts, there was also a reduction in participants' food insecurity, which is a strong risk factor for chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, cardiovascular disease, and certain mental health issues. Health Scripts was a huge success for our clinic patients with Medicaid coverage, nutrition-related chronic diseases, and food insecurity.

This type of multi-dimensional FIM program could not have been created without the collaborative community efforts with SCG who worked directly with local farmers to purchase and aggregate the nutrient-dense produce for distribution to our patient participants. Through SCG's lead, Health Scripts was initially funded by grants through the USDA NIFA Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) and subsequently the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) to ensure the key food insecurity-reducing component of our FIM program- the fresh, locally grown produce- could be made available to our patients. However, when grant funding was discontinued or disrupted, these produce prescriptions and grocery provisions could not be continued, lending to patients experiencing relapses in blood sugar control, weight, and other health markers.

Despite the absence of these grants to support the nutrition prescription and grocery provisions dimensions of our FIM program, a fellow Family Medicine and Lifestyle Medicine physician partner and I have continued to provide nutrition counseling services to our patients with nutrition-related chronic diseases. With this intervention, we continue to see improvements in medical markers and patient engagement. However, with our prior experience with the multi-dimensional Health Scripts FIM program, we now know the positive impact could be even greater in the management, reversal, and even prevention of nutrition-related chronic diseases through the consistent inclusion of nutrient-

dense, locally grown, and food insecurity-reducing produce. The expansion of the Section 115 demonstration waiver to include such nutrition services could reduce these gaps that inconsistent grant funding risks creating in their absence. Our patients are eager to have access to this FIM nutrition service again. I never thought I'd hear a patient requesting a "refill" of their kale like they would a blood pressure medication. With these multi-dimensional FIM interventions, they are. They are making the connections between such foods and their health. I wholeheartedly support HB2355 and hope to continue to care for and support my patients, community partners, and local farmers through the Food Is Medicine Act.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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COMMITTEE: Health and Mental Health			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: KATIE NIXON		PHONE NUMBER: 816-809-5074	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: GREEN GATE FAMILY FARM; NEW GROWTH; THE KANSAS CITY FOOD HUB; MISSOURI FARMERS UNION		TITLE: FARMER AND FOOD SYSTEMS DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 15197 HIGHWAY B			
CITY: WHEATLAND		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65779
EMAIL: katherine.m.nixon@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 10:44 AM	
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I am writing in support of HB2355.

I have been farming specialty crops and working with other specialty crop farmers professionally for over 15 years. Missouri specialty crop farmers are the best source of nutrient dense healthy food. When 1/3 of the people in the USA have preventable diet related diseases and we are on track to 45% obesity rates, something is clearly wrong with our food system. Food is Medicine initiatives are one tool for helping sick people get better while also driving local economies, especially in rural communities where economic opportunities are limited. I support this bill because it is one tool in helping people get better and it supports the hard-working farmers, that grow real food, have access to better markets.

If you would like more information from a farmer's perspective, please feel free to reach out. I was unable to be at the hearing, because we are busy on the farm. We grow food year round feeding as many as 50 families in the winter and many more in the summer months.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: KIMBERLY BUCKMAN		PHONE NUMBER: 660-833-8939	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: FEEDING MISSOURI		TITLE: DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY & COMMUNICATION	
ADDRESS: 2306 BLUFF CREEK DRIVE, GROUND LEVEL			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65201
EMAIL: kim@feedingmissouri.org	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 4:01 PM
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Honorable Chair Stinnett & Members of the House Committee on Health & Mental Health,

On behalf of Feeding Missouri, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2355, the “Food is Medicine Act.” We believe this legislation represents a practical, prevention-focused approach to reducing barriers to nutritious food and strengthening the stability of Missourians managing chronic conditions — many of whom are already navigating food access challenges in our communities.

Nearly 1 million Missourians, including 1 in 5 children, face hunger. Feeding Missouri’s six regional food banks serve all 114 counties and the City of St. Louis through more than 1,200 community and faith-based hunger-relief programs. Food banks often describe themselves as the safety net to the safety net—stepping in to help stabilize households and communities when illness, job loss, disasters, or other unplanned expenses occur.

That role provides us with a unique view of both the opportunities and challenges many of our neighbors face in accessing the critical nutrients needed for their health. We regularly see neighbors managing diet-sensitive conditions while also navigating tight budgets, transportation barriers, and competing household expenses. When access to adequate food is inconsistent, families are often forced into difficult tradeoffs — stretching limited resources among groceries, medications, utilities, and other essentials. When food access and health needs intersect in this way, it can become difficult for families to regain stability without coordinated support and intervention.

Missouri’s food banks are already prioritizing the nutritional quality of the food we distribute. Through the Foods to Encourage framework, our network intentionally prioritizes nutrient-dense items such as fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, dairy, and whole grains. Today, more than 70 percent of the food distributed through our network falls into these categories. This reflects our commitment to ensuring that all neighbors facing hunger; including those with specific dietary needs and food-related conditions, can access not just food but nourishing choices that support their health and well-being in the long run.

HB 2355 provides Missouri the opportunity to explore a prevention-focused approach through a federal demonstration waiver to test targeted nutrition services for certain MO HealthNet participants managing nutrition-related chronic disease, allowing the state to evaluate outcomes and ensure

accountability before considering broader policy decisions.

Feeding Missouri supports thoughtful, evidence-informed efforts that improve access to nutritious food while operating efficiently within existing systems. We are encouraged that the bill recognizes the potential role of community-based organizations and local growers, creating opportunities to strengthen Missouri's food systems while expanding access to healthy foods.

We appreciate the Committee's consideration of this practical approach and stand ready to serve as a resource as conversations move forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

**Kim Buckman
Feeding Missouri
Director of Advocacy & Communication
kim@feedingmissouri.org
(573) 801-0329**



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2355		DATE: 2/19/2026
COMMITTEE: Health and Mental Health		
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: KRISTI CRYMES		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 7:56 PM
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Chair and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2355, the Food Is Medicine Act. My name is Dr. Kristi Crymes, and I am a family physician in Springfield, Missouri. I care daily for patients living with diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and other chronic conditions that are deeply shaped by access to healthy, nutrient-dense food. I am writing in strong support of this legislation because it represents a practical, evidence-based, and fiscally responsible approach to improving health outcomes while reducing healthcare spending in our state.

Missouri faces a significant burden of diet-related disease. More than 35–37 percent of adults are classified as obese, over 12 percent have diabetes, and heart disease remains the leading cause of death. These conditions drive preventable hospitalizations, emergency department visits, disability, and long-term healthcare costs. From a clinical standpoint, medications alone cannot solve these problems. When patients lack reliable access to nutritious food, disease management becomes harder, complications increase, and healthcare spending rises. Poor diet is now a leading contributor to death and disability in the United States, and diet-related chronic disease accounts for the vast majority of healthcare expenditures.

House Bill 2355 directs Missouri to pursue a Section 1115 Medicaid waiver allowing targeted nutrition interventions, such as medically tailored meals, groceries, and produce prescriptions, to be integrated into patient care. These interventions address the root causes of chronic disease rather than only treating complications.

Food-as-medicine interventions are associated with fewer hospitalizations and emergency department visits and have the potential to prevent large numbers of hospitalizations nationwide. Produce-prescription programs for people with diabetes and food insecurity can avert cardiovascular events, improve quality of life, and remain cost-effective or cost-saving.

Missouri pilots already demonstrate meaningful results, including improved food stability, reductions in low-birthweight births that avoid costly neonatal care, projected annual savings of \$5.3 million in St. Louis, more than \$100 million in projected ten-year healthcare savings from produce prescriptions for diabetes, and approximately \$2,562 in annual savings per patient using medically tailored meals.

These savings come from preventing the most expensive forms of care—hospital stays, emergency visits, and long-term complications—rather than adding new spending.

This legislation also supports Missouri's local food system and rural economy. Every dollar spent on locally produced food generates approximately \$1.32 to \$1.90 in local economic activity, helping farms remain viable, supporting food businesses, and strengthening rural communities. Healthcare dollars can remain in Missouri while improving both health and economic resilience.

Importantly, House Bill 2355 does not create a permanent entitlement. It authorizes a time-limited federal waiver designed to test evidence-based, cost-saving interventions that reduce long-term spending rather than expand government programs. This is a prudent and accountable step toward improving healthcare in Missouri.

As a family physician, I see patients every day whose health could improve dramatically with consistent access to nutritious food. Food-based clinical care allows us to prevent disease progression, reduce hospitalizations, improve quality of life, and use taxpayer dollars more efficiently. This is one of the rare opportunities in healthcare where we can improve outcomes and lower costs at the same time.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support House Bill 2355. Thank you for your service to Missouri and for your thoughtful consideration.

**Respectfully submitted,
Dr. Kristi Crymes, DO
Family Medicine, Associate Program Director
CoxHealth Family Medicine Residency
Springfield, Missouri**



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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BILL NUMBER: HB 2355		DATE: 2/19/2026	
COMMITTEE: Health and Mental Health			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: LEXI LINSEMAN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: COLUMBIA CENTER FOR URBAN AGRICULTURE		TITLE: DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR REGISTERED DIETITIAN	
ADDRESS: 4301 W GIBBS RD.			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65202
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 12:00 AM	
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COMMITTEE: Health and Mental Health		
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: LINDSEY KELSAY		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 3:10 PM
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As a Registered Dietitian for 17 years, I have seen the impact nutrition care can have. However, the ability to implement nutrition changes means that clients must be able to afford healthy food. This means preventable health conditions like obesity, diabetes, and heart disease remain unmanaged and contribute to rising healthcare costs. outcomes.

Food Is Medicine programs, including medically tailored meals, produce prescriptions, and medically tailored groceries, can improve disease management, reduce hospitalizations, and lower healthcare costs. These interventions are most effective when paired with individualized nutrition counseling by a Registered Dietitian.

I respectfully urge you to support HB 2355 and advance Food Is Medicine initiatives in Missouri.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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COMMITTEE: Health and Mental Health		
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:		
WITNESS NAME: MAILE AUTERSON	PHONE NUMBER: 417-414-7129	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: SPRINGFIELD COMMUNITY GARDENS	TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 1126 N BROADWAY		
CITY: SPRINGFIELD	STATE: MO	ZIP: 65802
EMAIL: maile.auterson@springfieldcommunitygardens.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 3:56 PM

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At SCG, our vision is a community where everyone has access to healthy local food. With private and federal funding from the USDA and DHSS, we implemented a food is medicine pilot program with area doctors in Greene and surrounding counties. The program had positive results. Several participants lowered their A1c (blood sugar) test results and created lasting networks beyond the pilot program that encouraged the growing and eating of produce and unprocessed foods. Seniors were especially affected positively and reported less isolation and a general feeling of connectivity to their neighbors. The program also created a better awareness of the importance of a local food system that supports farmers. Good food is preventative medicine. Locally grown food has the potential to boost the Missouri economy. I support HB2355.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MARYCATHERINE CROOK		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 10:54 AM	

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In my role as Assistant Manager at Columbia Farmers Market, I manage a Produce Prescription program that supported over 80 low-income Boone County families in 2025. While many of these families are supported by WIC, SNAP, or other food incentive programs, the Produce Prescription program is unique and remarkable in the way that it connects people living at the intersection of chronic illness and low-income with fresh, local, nutrient dense foods. Foods that are harvested later in their growing cycles and closer to the time they are eaten have more nutrients than food that is harvested early for storage and shipping, meaning that prescriptions written for food purchased at local farmers markets is actually healthier for participants than food they can buy with their WIC or SNAP benefits at a grocery store. Plus, these prescriptions have the added benefit of supporting local farmers and Mid-Missouri agriculture. In 2025, prescription holders spent over \$76,000 with CFM farmers, putting money directly into the hands of local, Mid-Missouri farmers and contributing to over \$4 million dollars in total sales for vendors at CFM.

Participants in 2025 said that their prescriptions improved the lives of their families, decreased their cholesterol, helped them lose weight, and allowed them to follow the dietary advice of their physicians. They also spoke of additional and unintended benefits, including that the program helped them connect to their community, spend time outdoors and walking, teach their children valuable lessons about money and being resourceful with their food, and better mental health, all because of their shopping at the farmers market. Produce Prescription at Columbia Farmers Market actively supports a vibrant, healthy, strong local food system built by Mid-Missouri farmers and is a perfect example of the powerful effects of connecting low-income people to healthy, fresh, nutrient dense foods. I implore you support Food as Medicine in Missouri.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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COMMITTEE: Health and Mental Health		
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: MAURA PATEL		PHONE NUMBER: 314-596-1418
REPRESENTING: AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION		TITLE:
ADDRESS: 12400 OLIVE BLVD.		
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 63141
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 12:00 AM
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MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MIYA WARD		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 3:11 PM	
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I'm writing to you today as a resident of Spanish Lake, Missouri because I see every day what happens when people in my community don't have access to real, healthy food. It's not just about hunger—it's about the toll it takes on people's bodies and their health over time.

In a country as wealthy as ours, food should not be a privilege for those who can afford it. It is a basic human right. No one's health should depend on their bank account, their race, or their zip code.

Right now, it feels like our healthcare system only cares once someone is already sick. We're quick to hand out pills and expensive prescriptions, but we treat those as the first and last resort. We need to realize that medicine can only do so much if a person's body doesn't have the fuel it needs to function.

This bill, HB 2355, is common sense. If we give people access to nutritious food and the education to use it, we can actually prevent them from needing those expensive medicines in the first place. Food is medicine when people can actually get their hands on it.

I'm asking you to support this bill not just for the budget, but for the people in Spanish Lake and across Missouri who deserve a fair shot at a healthy life.



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TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: RANJANA HANS		PHONE NUMBER: 573-825-4527	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: RAW ROOTS TURMERIC; COLUMBIA FARMERS MARKET		TITLE: CEO AND FOUNDER RAW ROOTS TURMERIC	
ADDRESS: 7401 S BENNETT DRIVE			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65201
EMAIL: RawRootsTurmeric@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 10:53 AM	
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Raw Roots Turmeric is a Missouri-based farm growing fresh, specialty turmeric for health, culinary, and medicinal use. Our work sits at the intersection of soil health, human health, and local economies.

Through programs like Produce Prescriptions, we’ve seen first hand how food can function as preventive care — improving access to nutrient-dense, culturally relevant produce while creating stable markets for small and rural farmers. These programs allow growers like us to plan, invest, and scale responsibly, rather than relying solely on unpredictable direct-to-consumer sales.

The proposed Food is Medicine Act would strengthen this ecosystem by enabling Medicaid to support nutrition-based interventions and by prioritizing local growers and community-based organizations. This keeps healthcare dollars circulating in Missouri, supports family farms, and aligns public health goals with agricultural sustainability.

For farms like Raw Roots Turmeric, this legislation isn’t just about health outcomes — it’s about building resilient local food systems that work for farmers and communities alike



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TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: ROBYN SCHELP		PHONE NUMBER: 660-441-3260
REPRESENTING: KIDS WIN MISSOURI		TITLE: KIDS WIN MISSOURI
ADDRESS: 3909 SHERMAN CT		
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65203
EMAIL: rschelp@kidswinmissouri.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 8:17 PM

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The Food is Medicine Act offers a transformative approach to health for Missouri families by integrating targeted nutrition services directly into medical care. These interventions are critical for improving long-term health outcomes. National research indicates that programs aligned with "Food is Medicine" can reduce hospitalizations by 23% and emergency department visits by 13%, helping families manage chronic conditions like heart disease more effectively while keeping loved ones at home.

Beyond physical health, the Food is Medicine Act provides financial relief and economic stability for families and their communities. Missouri pilot programs have already demonstrated that these nutrition services can save \$1,614 in avoidable medical costs per patient over just a six-month period. The program supports local economies by purchasing local food, helping food businesses grow, and creating jobs across the food supply chain. The Food is Medicine Act ensures that Missouri families have the resources they need to thrive both physically and financially.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: SYDNEY GOSIK		PHONE NUMBER: 314-710-5532	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: FOOD OUTREACH		TITLE: DIRECTOR OF NUTRITION & PROGRAMS	
ADDRESS: 3117 OLIVE STREET			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63103
EMAIL: sydney@foodoutreach.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 3:28 PM	
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Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Food Outreach, I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 2355 to authorize a Medicaid Section 1115 waiver for Food Is Medicine nutrition services in Missouri.

For 38 years, Food Outreach has provided medically tailored meals and groceries to individuals living with serious and chronic illnesses across the St. Louis region. Each year, we serve more than 2,000 Missourians whose health outcomes depend on consistent access to clinically appropriate nutrition.

Why HB 2355 Matters:

Food Is Medicine interventions—including medically tailored meals, groceries, and nutrition counseling—are evidence-based health services designed to support disease treatment and prevention.

Research shows these services:

- Improve management of diabetes, heart disease, HIV, cancer, and renal disease
- Reduce hospital admissions and emergency department visits
- Improve medication adherence and treatment tolerance
- Lower total health care costs, particularly among high-risk populations

Peer-reviewed studies of medically tailored meal programs have documented significant reductions in hospitalizations and overall medical expenditures, demonstrating a strong return on investment for Medicaid programs.

Impact for Missouri

HB 2355 would allow Missouri Medicaid to test and scale nutrition interventions that:

- Improve health outcomes for high-risk patients with diet-related conditions
- Reduce avoidable health care utilization and costs
- Support hospital discharge and recovery, preventing readmissions
- Address health disparities, particularly in low-income and medically underserved communities
- Strengthen care coordination between health systems and community providers

Food Outreach emphasizes the inclusion of community-based organizations as nutrition providers. As a long-standing provider, Food Outreach has the infrastructure, nutrition standards, and healthcare partnerships necessary to support implementation and evaluation of Food Is Medicine services.

A Smart, Bipartisan Investment

HB 2355 represents a fiscally responsible opportunity to improve population health while controlling Medicaid costs. States that have implemented similar programs are demonstrating improved outcomes and cost savings.

We urge the committee to support HB 2355 and position Missouri as a leader in innovative, patient-centered care. Food Outreach stands ready to collaborate with state agencies, health systems, and community partners to ensure successful implementation.

Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to improving the health of Missourians.

**Respectfully submitted,
Food Outreach**



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TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: TYLA MILLER		PHONE NUMBER: 314-930-5688	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: SENTIMENT SESSIONS		TITLE: OWNER	
ADDRESS: 1310 PAPIN ST			
CITY: SAINT LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63103
EMAIL: tyla@sentimentsessions.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 8:28 PM	
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Written Testimony in Support of the Missouri Food Is Medicine Act

To the Honorable Members of the Missouri Legislature,

My name is Tyla Miller, a Missouri resident and founder of Sentiment Sessions. I am writing in strong support of the Food Is Medicine Act.

In my work with individuals navigating chronic stress, inflammation, digestive disorders, and metabolic dysfunction, one pattern is consistent: nutrition plays a direct role in nervous system stability and long-term health outcomes.

Poor food access does not just affect weight. It affects stress physiology, blood sugar regulation, inflammation markers, mood stability, and overall resilience. When individuals lack access to nourishing, therapeutic foods, their bodies remain in a chronic state of dysregulation. Over time, this drives higher medical utilization and greater long-term healthcare costs.

The Food Is Medicine Act represents a practical and fiscally responsible shift toward prevention. By integrating medically tailored meals, produce prescriptions, and nutrition support into Missouri's Medicaid framework, the state can reduce hospitalizations, improve chronic disease management, and lower emergency care dependence.

This approach also strengthens Missouri agriculture. Our farmers have the capacity to grow nutrient-dense, whole foods that support therapeutic dietary needs. Connecting local producers with healthcare-supported nutrition programs benefits both public health and the state economy.

Food is not simply sustenance. It is a biological input that directly affects how the body regulates stress, heals tissue, and maintains stability.

I respectfully urge you to support and advance this legislation for the health of Missouri families and the sustainability of our healthcare system.

Respectfully,
 Tyla Miller
 Saint Louis, MO 63103

Sentiment Sessions



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2355		DATE: 2/19/2026
COMMITTEE: Health and Mental Health		
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: TYLER TRAVERS		PHONE NUMBER:
REPRESENTING: KANBE's MARKETS		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:	STATE: MO	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 12:00 AM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.		



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2355		DATE: 2/19/2026	
COMMITTEE: Health and Mental Health			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: WENDY CASTLE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 3:20 PM	
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

My name is Wendy Castle. I am a Registered Dietitian and Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist. I am writing in support of House Bill 2355, The Food is Medicine Act. In my work with individuals and families managing diabetes and other chronic conditions, I see that nutrition is essential to prevention and treatment. Yet many patients struggle with food insecurity, limited access to healthy foods, or lack of individualized guidance — making meaningful change difficult. HB 2355 recognizes food as an evidence-based healthcare intervention. Food Is Medicine programs, such as medically tailored meals and produce prescriptions, improve health outcomes and reduce costs — especially when paired with personalized nutrition counseling from a Registered Dietitian to ensure recommendations are practical and patient-centered. As a healthcare professional dedicated to improving the lives of Missourians living with diabetes and other chronic diseases, I respectfully urge you to support HB 2355 and advance Food Is Medicine initiatives across our state.

Respectfully,
Wendy Castle, MPH, RD, LD, CDCES



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2355		DATE: 2/19/2026	
COMMITTEE: Health and Mental Health			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: PATTY CANTRELL		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: NEW GROWTH		TITLE: OUTREACH AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 112 W. 4TH ST.			
CITY: APPLETON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64724
EMAIL: pcantrell@newgrowthmo.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 1:42 PM	
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

New Growth works with farm and food entrepreneurs across Missouri, and in neighboring states as lead organizer of the Heartland Food Business Coalition.

We see firsthand how the need and demand for healthier food is driving significant innovation and risk taking among small farm and food businesses. We also work with a number of regional food hubs and others pooling products from many farms to serve larger wholesale orders.

We believe the Food is Medicine Act (HB 2355) presents an important opportunity for state lawmakers to reduce chronic diseases, save taxpayers money, and strengthen our state's economy with support for farm and food businesses.

By establishing a MO Healthnet Waiver For Nutrition Services, the legislation could open an essential channel between those caring for people with costly diseases and the family farms and local food entrepreneurs who can produce the fresh and nutritious foods those many Missourians need.

Ultimately, the nutrition challenges our healthcare system faces stem in large part from the fact that it is difficult for people to find and afford fresh and whole, quality foods, even in rural areas.

New local food purchasing through MO Healthnet would not only save lives and save Missouri money, it would also provide a relatively reliable market for family farmers and food entrepreneurs. Food is Medicine sales in Missouri would:

- **Help family farms and food business entrepreneurs plan and build their enterprises over the long term.**
- **Build confidence for future investment in infrastructure, such as processing and distribution, needed to meet growing demand for local and regionally produced food.**

Missouri's farmers and food entrepreneurs are ready for this opportunity. New Growth and many on-the-ground community partners are ready to help with business assistance and supply chain coordination.

The Food is Medicine Act presents an important opportunity for lawmakers to consider on Missouri's journey toward a healthier future for individuals, communities, and local economies.

CONTACT

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