



**Testimony Regarding Kansas Employee Emergency Savings Account (KEESA)
Ms. Leigh Phillips, CEO, SaverLife**

**House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee
February 15, 2022**

Chairman Tarwater and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit comments related to the Kansas Employee Emergency Savings Account legislation. My name is Leigh Phillips and I am the CEO of SaverLife, a national nonprofit. Our mission is to change the balance for working families by helping them to save and invest in their future. Through engaging technologies and strategic partnerships, we give working people the methods and motivation to build a habit of savings, establish an emergency fund, and take control of their finances. SaverLife represents over half a million members nationwide, with roughly 2,100 members in the state of Kansas.

Forty percent of Americans have less than \$400 in savings, and a single unexpected expense could profoundly disrupt their lives. The problem only compounds for the millions of people living paycheck to paycheck. We know that savings - even in small amounts - makes a significant difference to family financial security. SaverLife's research shows that households with just \$100 in savings are 95% more likely to pay their utility bills on time, and households with \$250 in savings are 70% less likely to be evicted from their homes.

Yet despite these benefits, millions of Americans struggle to save. To address this challenge head-on, SaverLife leverages technology to make saving money rewarding and fun. We encourage regular saving through prizes, rewards, expert resources, and community support. Through our integrated network of employers, financial institutions, and nonprofits we advance aspirational savings programs, analytic insights, and policy initiatives dedicated to a more financially secure America.

67% of employees in the U.S. report being financially stressed, and their top concern is a lack of emergency savings¹. HB2680, the Kansas Employee Emergency Savings Account, is bipartisan sponsored legislation and is an important step forward in creating financial stability for American workers. This bill has multiple benefits. It will benefit the hardworking people of Kansas by providing accessible savings tools directly through their workplace. It will benefit employers, because a financially

¹ [PwC's 8th annual Employee Financial Wellness Survey, PwC US, 2019.](#)



healthy workforce is a more productive workforce, and it will benefit the nation by serving as an example of how state governments can support businesses as they develop employer benefits designed for the 21st century workplace.

As we emerge from a challenging two years for employers and employees alike, it is vitally important that we use this opportunity to develop common sense, win-win solutions for both businesses and workers. As the economy rebounds, employers are facing challenges in recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce. Simultaneously, workers are looking to rebuild financial security for their families.

Small businesses, in particular, worry about hiring², as they recover from the crushing effects of COVID-19 closures: in a recent survey, 50% of small businesses across the country said that **finding and retaining qualified employees is their primary concern**³. Adding emergency savings to employee benefit programs—like the proposed Kansas Employee Emergency Savings Account does—can help attract and retain workers in a way that is cost-effective and mutually beneficial.⁴

SaverLife knows first-hand just how effective employer-based savings programs are at improving financial well-being for employees and creating a more stable workforce for employers. SaverLife partners with employers to provide our turnkey savings platform, which leverages prize-linked savings, gamification and behavioral science to encourage employees to develop a habit of savings while lowering stress and improving morale. We have worked with some of the country's largest employers, including Levi Strauss, KFC, and HCA Healthcare. These employers are leading the way by offering emergency savings programs to their employees and demonstrating a commitment to the financial health of their workers and their communities.

² Allen, Mike. Jan. 24, 2022. "[Small businesses see hiring as No. 1 worry](#)". Axios.

³ Goldman Sachs Jan. 24, 2022. "[Survey: Small Businesses on the Brink - New Survey Data Shows Omicron Hurting Main Street. Leading Small Business Owners to Overwhelmingly Support Congress Passing Additional Aid](#)".

⁴ Tergesen, Anne. August 27, 2021. "[The New Employer Benefit: Matching Emergency Savings](#)". Wall Street Journal.

Saverlife

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About.SaverLife.org



We offer SaverLife Membership to all employees of a company, through which they receive:

- **SaverLife's Foundational Games and Challenges** that engage and promote savings and other financial behaviors through challenges and incentives.
- **Financial Education Content** - Written by certified financial coaches and other trusted experts, our financial education content supports employees to better manage their financial lives and to begin and maintain a savings habit. We take pride in providing high-quality, accurate, and unbiased financial information and recommendations.
- **Community** - Our online community platform offers employees the opportunity to connect with each other, and the broader SaverLife membership, to discuss savings tips and tricks, ask a question or discuss financial issues on their minds in our Forums. They can also learn about other employees and their savings journey.
- **Financial Health Score** - All new employees take the financial health score when they sign up for SaverLife, which provides both the employer and employees a baseline data point and allows them to begin to personalize a savings journey on our platform.

SaverLife offers a simple solution for employers looking to launch a savings program for their workers. Our mobile-first platform links to an employee's existing account at their bank or credit union, allowing employees to save at the financial institution of their choice and minimizing complexity and liability for employers.

Our results speak to the importance of these types of employee benefits, and their popularity with workers. Across our various employer-based programs:

- 50% of participants deposit \$500 or more in the first six months of joining
- 63% of employees are less likely to borrow money after using SaverLife
- 68% of employees are less stressed about money — which makes them stronger, more stable employees
- 65% of employees now say they're more likely to stay with the company, helping employers retain the workers they are investing in.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this important piece of legislation. We urge your support of the measure, which we believe will greatly benefit employers and workers in Kansas, and serve as a blueprint for the rest of the country.

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