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To: House Financial Institutions and Pensions Committee
From: Mark Tomb, VP of Governmental Affairs
Date: March 15, 2023

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 34

On behalf of the Kansas Association of REALTORS® (KAR), thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of policies outlined in SB 34. As REALTORS®, we reaffirm the goal of “a decent home and a suitable living environment for every family.” REALTORS® are committed to helping every single Kansan who so desires to realize the America Dream of homeownership. The policies included in SB 34 provide additional and potentially powerful options for Kansans trying to solve our state’s housing issues.

KAR represents over 11,000 members involved in residential, commercial and agricultural real estate and has advocated on behalf of the state’s property owners for more than 100 years. REALTORS® serve an important role in the state’s economy and are dedicated to working with our elected officials to create better communities by supporting economic development, a high quality of life and providing affordable housing opportunities while protecting the rights of private property owners.

Increasing access to homeownership is a goal of REALTORS® and it should be a goal for the State of Kansas. Simply put, we need more housing to support the needs of our current and future workforce. A shortage of quality housing is an undeniable barrier to economic growth and development in any community. During the pandemic, sales of existing homes in most areas of the state were fairly robust, but there exists an underlying issue with the market involving supply. The state’s housing shortage exists at nearly all price segments and has numerous causes.

SB 34 makes changes to the popular Rural Housing Incentive District (RHID) program, first by allowing larger cities (populations above 60,000) to be able to use the tool for certain affordable housing developments. This RHID expansion has important guardrails with a true focus on more affordable housing developments. These guardrails include limits on the number of units and average square footage of residences constructed under the new section which would not be able to exceed 1,650 square feet. The second portion of the bill would assist more rural area housing developments by expanding the use of RHID for vertical infrastructure when existing infrastructure has been in place or at least ten years or if subject to an improvement district tax assessment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 34. This bill offers a strong set of tools to address housing issues in a responsible way. KAR requests that the House Financial Institutions and Pensions Committee act on this bill favorably.