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To: Rep. Steven Johnson, Chairman, House Taxation Committee
House Taxation Committee members
From: Gretchen Kunkel, Chair, Healthy Communities Wyandotte Policy Committee
Date: February 3, 2017
Re: Support for HB 2237

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2237, also known as the “Rise Up Kansas” plan. I am writing on behalf of Healthy Communities Wyandotte (HCW), a coalition of more than 100 organizations and individuals dedicated to creating a healthier Wyandotte County.

Our members recognize that Wyandotte County’s health is tied to many of the programs and resources that the state provides our residents. Programs such as TANF and KanCare provide a safety net for those who live with disabilities or in poverty. Our public schools depend on state funds to provide a quality education to our children. Our mental health providers depend on them to offer care to all residents regardless of their ability to pay.

The state’s current fiscal condition is not strong enough to meet these and other needs in Wyandotte County and the rest of Kansas. In fact, the state is facing a fiscal crisis that must be addressed immediately if we are going to preserve the ability to confront a number of health challenges.

We support HB 2237 because it takes the aggressive measures to stabilize the state’s financial standing, strengthen its capacity to conduct state business, and provide the resources necessary to create healthy communities across the state. We are encouraged by many measures in HB 2237, including those that:

- End the “march to zero,” the plan to phase out all income taxes. In 2012, the state income tax made up half the state’s revenue. Today, it accounts for just 40 percent.
- Re-instate a third income tax bracket. This cut accounts for 70% of the Brownback tax plan’s price tag.
- Close the “LLC loophole.” This loophole depletes the state of \$300 million and has failed to generate the jobs its proponents said it would.
- Lower the sales tax on groceries. The sales tax hikes used to fill a portion of the revenue gap created by the income tax cuts have had a disproportionate effect on the poor and middle class, who already were paying some of the highest sales tax on food in the country.
- Recommit to investing in roads and bridges with a modernized gas tax. As the state borrows from highway fund, its infrastructure investment has languished.

The Healthy Communities Wyandotte coalition urges the House Taxation Committee to support HB 2237, because it would put Kansas on a path toward the financial security, and back toward becoming a healthier state. Thank you, again, for allowing me to submit this testimony.