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Testimony in Opposition to HB 2595 10 February 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2595. The title of this bill suggests it deals with food items available at restaurants and in vending machines. Unfortunately for families and communities in Kansas, it does much more than that. The overall impact of the bill is damaging both to public health, by suppressing consumer's access to important health and nutrition information, and to the principle that "The government closest to the people serves the people best," by banning local elected officials from enacting policies their own citizens may desire.

It is no secret that parents, families, and communities are seeking more and better nutrition information, local goods and healthier alternatives in order to make better choices. Farmer's markets are flourishing. Demand for healthier alternatives, whole grains and easily understood nutritional facts are at an all-time high. At the same time Kansas farmers and ranchers have a growing number of opportunities in front of them to connect directly with consumers and sell their products locally. This bill creates unnecessary barriers to all of this.

Frankly, this bill appears to be an overly intrusive solution to a non-existent problem in our State.

A recent report from KDHE showed that 64.4 percent of Kansans were overweight or obese. There are numerous factors that contribute to this public health problem and the solutions are complex. However, what is clear is that the ramifications of poor health are costly - in terms of quality of life as well as economic impact. As health care costs continue to spiral ever-higher it is incumbent upon all of us to work toward reasonable solutions.

Consumers are seeking nutritional information and healthier alternative as they make food purchasing decision for themselves and their families. Enacting policies restricting consumer's access to the information they desire is counterproductive.

The American Heart Association urges to you avoid a one-size-fits-all solution and allow our local units of government to be responsive to the desires of their constituents. The American Heart Association urges you to reject HB 2595.

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