



KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE COMMERCE COMMITTEE
HB 2595
FEBRUARY 17, 2016

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony in opposition to HB 2595.

This bill is aimed at regulation of consumer incentive items and labeling of food by political subdivisions. Kansas counties are considered political subdivisions, and hence would be affected by this legislation.

The Kansas legislature has appointed local boards of county commissioners as the public health board in each county (K.S.A. 65-201). Yet HB 2595 would restrict local regulation and decision-making on public health issues relating to nutrition.

KAC is concerned about another state encroachment on local control. There may be communities in Kansas where the local citizenry would want the type of involvement at the local level prohibited by HB 2595. HB 2595 takes away the ability of the local community and its local board of health to determine its own programs and standards, contrary to existing Kansas law that delegates public health to Kansas counties.

An example is Reno County, which has a number of food deserts located within county limits. South Hutchinson has just recently enacted a Food Policy Council, which has made major strides in filling the food deserts located in their municipality. HB 2595 will surely slow, if not halt altogether, the work of the South Hutchinson local food policy council. We expect that the legislation would also stymie the development of community garden operations that have been championed in the state, and the rezoning efforts of Kansas communities for urban agricultural use. We also question HB 2595's effects on organizations like the Community Agricultural Site (C.A.S) that partners with at-risk, need-based organizations to offer fresh produce and healthy eating resources to underserved populations. These local programs are striving to address some of the most pressing public health concerns of our time such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and other chronic diseases associated with obesity and poor nutrition.

I appreciate your consideration of our remarks in opposition to HB 2595, and we ask that you hold the bill in committee. Thank you for your time.

Melissa Wangemann, General Counsel