

Testimony in Opposition to HB 2595

From a Kansas Voter

Chairman Hutton and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns about HB 2595. I am writing as a citizen of Kansas who has spent over two decades of my professional career working in some capacity to improve the health of those around me, specifically in the area of obesity and diabetes. Both research and my own experience - working with hundreds of residents in dozens of communities - has taught me this: information alone will not change behavior, but information and the ability to make healthy choices will. People want to live in healthy communities where the local energy and desires help shape the environments in which to raise families. Choice is very personal, but it's essential to have that choice.

Over the past few years, I have witnessed local governments across the state, often working in conjunction with bipartisan non-profits, make and implement "healthy living" decisions that reflect the very real needs and desires of the people living in those communities. No one likes anyone telling them what they can and can't eat, but the vast majority of residents and families welcome the opportunity to have the information and the choice in regards to their food and grocery purchases.

Real life example: a busy working mom is juggling the after-school activities of her children; it's now 7pm at the ballpark and her family needs to be fed. Because of local decisions, the concession stand offers information about the nutritional information of the foods – and it offers Mom or Dad a choice, so that the healthy option is just as easy to grab. Data from the county recreation centers that implemented these locally-driven changes say it all – the healthy food sales often outweigh the unhealthy items. People want the choice. These are the types of environmental changes that "stick" and will likely do much more to improve health, well-being and societal productivity than yet another individual going on a fad diet. Most importantly, these environmental changes are being driven by the residents and voters themselves... at the local level.

I am an educated, voting, tax-paying, full-time-working Kansan citizen who has spent countless personal and professional hours trying to improve our state. I run marathons and eat salad every day, but my personal lifestyle is not for everyone. **What is for everyone are the decisions that local governments make in regards to nutrition information and access to different food choices.** I am appalled at the idea of a state Legislature trying to wrest this very fundamental right of decision-making away from the very citizens it proposes to represent.

I respectfully oppose HB 2595 as a Kansan who believes the best decisions are made by the people who live them. Thank you very much for this opportunity to share my concerns.

Elizabeth Stewart Burger (Lecompton, KS)