



February 9th, 2016

HB 2595, Commerce, Labor, and Economic Development Committee

Chairman Hutton and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding House Bill 2595. The Latino Health for All Coalition is a coalition of more than forty Kansas City, Kansas organizations working to improve opportunities for healthy eating, physical activity, and access to health care for Latinos in Kansas City, Kansas.

The issue of nutrition and the food environment is particularly important to our community. In Wyandotte County, almost 40% of adults are reported to be obese. Approximately one in five Wyandotte County residents live in areas with limited access to opportunities to purchase healthy foods in supermarkets or large grocery stores. From our own assessment efforts, we know that at least 80% of all items offered in vending machines is high in sugar, fat, and/or sodium, while being low in nutritional content.

Our partners have been working to address the limited food environment by implementing a number of evidence-based approaches, including enhanced labeling and promotion of healthy foods and improved procurement of healthy foods for vending options. The passage of House Bill 2595 would severely limit the community-driven effort undertaken to improve the health of community members.

A critical part of public health practice is to work with local entities who support vending in public places and to provide information to consumers through food labeling and promotion so they can make healthy choices. Prohibiting local entities from assuring environments in which people have healthy options and are made aware of them is poor practice for multiple reasons. This bill would remove opportunities for community members to exercise local control in making changes to improve the health of their community. Additionally, it would reduce the options available for engaging in public health practice at the local level. Lastly, this bill clearly prohibits local policy solutions but does not offer alternative or effective options.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the committee oppose House Bill 2595.

February 17, 2016

Amanda Gress, Director of Government Relations
Kansas Action for Children
Testimony on House Bill 2595
House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee

Chairman Hutton and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share our opposition to House Bill 2595. Kansas Action for Children is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to shaping health, education and economic policy that improves the lives of Kansas children and families. As part of KAC's efforts to ensure all Kansas children grow up healthy, we support policies that can improve the health of children and their families.

Poor nutrition and its related effects are a serious health concern for Kansas children. 30% of Kansas children, ages 10 to 17, are considered overweight or obese. This can lead to significant health problems later on in life, including diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. These negative health effects can continue into a child's adult years; children who are overweight are more likely to be overweight as adults. Kansas can do better to ensure its children grow up healthy.

KAC encourages Kansas policymakers to allow local government the ability to innovate and explore options to encourage healthy eating. Reinforcing healthy eating habits means that Kansas children are less likely to grow up overweight or obese, and more likely to be healthy as adults. HB 2595 removes local governments' ability to address health disparities linked to food and food access, preventing local government from addressing some of the most pressing health concerns in Kansas today. Kansas instead has the opportunity to support local initiatives like food policy councils, community gardens, and urban agriculture zoning to support the wider availability of healthy food across Kansas communities.

Kansas should ensure that local governments can promote the health and well-being of all Kansas children. We respectfully request that committee members oppose HB 2595.



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