

Chairman Hutton and Members of the Committee,

The Johnson County Department of Health and Environment and the Johnson County Park and Recreation District (JCPRD) are opposed to HB 2595.

Johnson County Government *supports the retention and strengthening of local home rule authority to allow locally elected officials to conduct the business of their jurisdiction in a manner that best reflects the desires of their constituents and results in maximum benefit to that community.* This bill would restrict local entities' ability to act on citizen desires and roll back current and future efforts to improve our community's health.

A 2012 survey of Johnson County residents conducted on behalf of the Department of Health and Environment showed that 74 percent of residents felt that clearly labeling the nutritional content of menu items was a "very effective" or "effective" measure to promote healthy eating outside the home. A similarly large majority said they would purchase healthier items if they were available in their workplaces or at concession stands at recreation events.

A partnership between Health and Environment and JCPRD resulted in a valued program that benefits the citizens of Johnson County. On January 1, 2013, JCPRD modified its menu at several concessions facilities, eliminating fryers and serving healthier options. Now, a variety of delicious and healthy foods are available, and calorie counts are listed on the menu boards at New Century Fieldhouse, Okun Fieldhouse and The Theatre in the Park.

The results? Concessions' net revenues have increased; JCPRD has received nothing but praise from patrons; and JCPRD's efforts in this area have been recognized at the state and national level. These venues serve over 500,000 visitors annually. HB 2595 would be a huge step backwards in JCPRD's efforts, and successes, to positively impact the community's health and well-being.

A core function of public health is assessment. As a result of community health assessment, one of the Department of Health and Environment's top priorities is access to adequate nutrition in order to reduce chronic disease and health disparities. This bill could slow to a halt years of progress in these areas.

Currently both the County's newly-forming Food Policy Council and the Community Health Assessment Process team are moving forward with public/private partnerships to address healthy food availability; these partnerships are built on a great deal of citizen feedback and direction. These bodies—and the successful programs that have emerged from them—do not restrict consumer choice. Rather, they ensure consumers have the knowledge and options to *make* choices about where and what they eat.

Johnson County opposes HB 2595 because it will keep our departments from doing the work of the people. We encourage the committee to vote NO.



Jill Geller, Director



Lougene Marsh, Director