



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Written Testimony in Opposition to HB 2595

House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee Wednesday, February 17, 2015

Chairman Hutton and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns about House Bill 2595. The Kansas State Alliance of YMCAs represents the collective voice and impact of 10 Kansas Y Associations that serve 536,000 Kansans. Our charitable work strengthens communities by advancing the goals of youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

We are submitting written testimony in opposition to this bill because we feel it may hamper local and community efforts, including those of Kansas Ys, to promote healthy living among seniors, children, and families - one of our top legislative priorities.

Obesity is a crisis plaguing 1 in 3 Kansans, and our state now has the 13th highest adult obesity rate in the nation. 30% of Kansas children age 10-17 are considered overweight or obese. The problem is staggering and a leading cost driver at the state and national level, but Kansas does not have the capacity to address this health epidemic on its own. Thankfully many community organizations, such as the Y, have taken on this challenge and are affecting positive change by promoting healthy food choices in Kansas communities and developing a foundation of healthy habits for life. For example, Ys in Kansas are providing evidence-based, CDC-endorsed chronic disease prevention programs, like the YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program (YDPP), to prevent obesity and heart disease, and we are offering structured exercise programs for children, adults and seniors to help Kansans thrive. And we applaud the efforts of many Kansas school districts and other community programs for offering and encouraging good choices to those they serve and touch.

The bill's broad definition of "political subdivision" seems to have the unintended consequence of disallowing any organization receiving even the smallest amount of public funds from exerting local control over the food they serve. This is of concern to the YMCA because as the largest childcare provider in the state, we have a responsibility to the families and communities we serve to build lifelong habits in youth that create healthy futures. Driven by commitment and cause, the Y has pledged to educate ALL kids in the Kansas communities we serve about healthy lifestyles, to model healthy behaviors and to cultivate environments that make it easier for kids to make healthier choices. We can only do this effectively by looking for unique solutions and interventions, and not relying on a one-size-fits-all approach.

We urge our state legislators to support, not hinder, community efforts that encourage healthy eating and active living so we can aggressively deal with some of the most pressing public health concerns in Kansas today.

We respectfully request that the committee oppose HB 2595.

KANSAS STATE ALLIANCE OF YMCAS

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