

CULTIVATE

Kansas City

Testimony in Opposition to HB 2595

February 15, 2016

HB 2595, Department of Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee

Chairman Hutton and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2595.

Cultivate Kansas City grows food, farms and community in support of a sustainable, healthy and local food system in greater Kansas City. Our work is achieved via extensive cooperation and collaboration with various local governments, food policy councils, economic councils and other peer organizations. HB 2595 goes against the goals of the appointed Kansas Local Food and Farm Task Force, which recently released its Legislative Report containing policy and funding recommendations for expanding and supporting local food systems. Cultivate Kansas City opposes HB 2595 because it limits local policymakers' abilities to foment the type of work that strengthens local food systems and local economies.

Kansas families and communities are seeking better nutrition information, local goods, and healthier alternatives to make better decisions for their families. Kansas farmers have a growing number of opportunities to connect directly with consumers, selling their products locally and bolstering local economies. HB 2595 will halt the growth of the food policy councils, community gardens, local farms, urban agriculture zoning, and other local initiatives that support wider availability of healthy food across Kansas communities as demanded by Kansas families, recommended by the appointed Kansas Local Food and Farm Task Force, and supported by the work of Cultivate Kansas City.

While the title of this bill suggests it only deals with food items available at restaurants and in vending machines, it could potentially affect Kansas families and communities in a broad and sweeping manner. By limiting the ability of local government and other local councils and committees to enact or recommend policies on behalf of the citizens they serve, HB 2595 could all reduce consumer access to important health and nutrition information and adversely impact public health.

By removing tools for addressing food based health disparities, it also ties the hands of local authority to address pressing health concerns, including diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and other chronic diseases associated with obesity and poor nutrition. Wyandotte County ranks last in many of these indicators, and it is no secret that poor health has a tremendous negative economic impact.

Cultivate Kansas City urges you to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to local food systems and allow our local units of government to respond to the desires of their constituents. Cultivate Kansas City respectfully requests rejection of HB 2595.

