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Healthy People Build Strong Communities

Testimony of the Kansas Association of Local Health Departments (KALHD) to the

House Committee on Taxation

Opponent for HB 2142 • February 9, 2021

Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to supply written testimony in opposition to House Bill 2142 regarding the reimbursement to certain property owners of property taxes resulting from a forced shutdown or capacity limitation by a county. KALHD is a nonprofit association dedicated to strengthening local health departments for the purpose of improving and protecting the health of all Kansans.

While it appears the driving motivation behind HB 2142 is regarding COVID-19 related shutdowns, KALHD is very concerned at the broad language in the bill. It appears any sort of shut down could trigger property tax reimbursement, including businesses that may be shut down for other health-related reasons (e.g., a restaurant that has serious sanitary code violations). Given so much funding for local health departments stems from the property tax, this bill could create pressure to not shut entities down for fear of an impact on the local health department's budget, even if that action is the most appropriate one to protect the health and safety of county residents. This would run counter to KALHD's focus on funding for public health to support core infrastructure and modernization efforts and could weaken public health protections.

Local health departments recognize the COVID-19 restrictions have placed economic strain on Kansans. That said, HB 2142 is far too broadly written to be good policy from a public health perspective. It is for these reasons that KALHD opposes HB 2142 and asks that you not recommend it for passage.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis Kriesel".

Dennis Kriesel

Executive Director, Kansas Association of Local Health Departments