

Testimony in support of HB 2665, Charlotte O'Hara, 15712 Windsor, O.P. 66224
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Committee members chair and vice chair, thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon in support of HB 2665. The basis of my support of this bill is to rein in the cities' propensity of increasing the size of local government, hiding behind fees for new programs such as licensing of rental properties, while insisting city councils are prudent with taxpayer money and are not raising taxes. Naturally the cities ignore the fact of the built in tax increase of reappraisal, but that is for another day's discussion.

I'm certain the cities will bewail the future without the authority to license rental properties, but I submit to you, they will lose no power of enforcing current city maintenance codes, which are the "tools" they use in the rental licensing requirements. They have simply added mandatory licensing with the attendant fees and annual inspections. Cities have not increased the requirements for basic habitation.

So why did they go to the trouble of passing these new ordinances requiring rental licensing? Well, after my visit with staff in Overland Park, the answer became very clear. Staff readily admitted they already had the necessary tools to deal with derelict properties, it's just they needed more enforcement officers.

No need for a new program to increase the layers of bureaucracy, however, since the City Council in Overland Park did not want to cut costs in other areas to pay for the 3 or 4 additional enforcement officers, they opted to develop another program, pay for the enforcement officers through fees for rental licensing and costing the taxpayers more in the long run because of a new fiefdom being created.

Estimate of rental fees in Overland Park is \$300,000.00 annually. City Council members noted that in three years they will review the success of this new program. Never mind the nearly \$1,000,000 that will be taken from the private sector over the 3 year period and put into government coffers!

One other issue, I would strongly urge this committee to address: Public comments at city council meetings. Currently in Overland Park, public comments are not allowed unless there is a public hearing being held on a specific issue. I find that extremely telling that the voice of the people is not of concern for at least our O.P. City Council. By adding a simple amendment to this bill mandating cities to have public comment time available at the **beginning** City Council meetings, you could remedy this situation and afford the public the opportunity to address their City Council in a public forum.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 2665 and the amendment for public comments at city council meeting I have suggested. I stand for questions.

