



Testimony

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Rehabilitation of Abandoned and Nuisance Housing SB 338

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House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee**

The Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City supports SB 338. The City of Kansas City is making the revitalization of neighborhoods a top priority. Through the Unified Government Land Bank and partnerships with community housing organizations and private businesses, our goal is to streamline and expedite the process for dealing with the growing blight of abandoned, nuisance and foreclosed housing.

Wyandotte County has several thousand abandoned houses with code violations and vacant lots which are creating blight and depressing home values for neighbors. Many of the abandoned properties which are creating blight sit empty for so long, they become unsalvageable and can not be rehabilitated and returned as useful housing. The goal of SB 338 is save these homes and return to the market as properties which can again be lived in. That will help citizens, neighborhoods and the city at-large.

The Unified Government Commission has formed a Neighborhood Housing Task Force with dozens of community organizations, neighborhood groups, government departments and other cities to identify issues and strategies to address problems caused by abandoned and blighted housing. The desired goals are to revitalize neighborhoods with attractive and affordable housing and to promote clean and safe neighborhoods. One of the major strategies is to create a clear path to gain control of abandoned, blighted, nuisances properties and to reduce the amount of time it takes to get the properties fixed. SB 338 is a critical tool in accomplishing those goals.

There is growing interest in our community from non-profit groups alike in acquiring abandoned, blighted housing, then fixing it up and selling it at affordable prices. There are also productive discussions about educational programs for landlords, renters and owners about minimum code requirements and to increase resources to assist people in dealing with code violations before the homes get beyond the point of saving.

SB 338 is the result of several years of discussions, compromises and revisions. The Unified Government is confident the bill is now in a form which will help us effectively deal with the problem of abandoned and blighted housing, while still protecting the rights of property owners.