



May 6, 2015

Ashley Jones-Wisner
State Policy Manager, KC Healthy Kids
HB 2429, House Committee on Taxation

Chairman Kleeb and members of the House Committee on Taxation –

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns about the increase in state sales tax to 6.5%. KC Healthy Kids is a Kansas City area non profit focused on reducing childhood obesity. Our policy work and programs address school nutrition, community engagement and youth advocacy.

Currently Kansas has the nation's second highest sales tax on food, trailing only Mississippi. In some Kansas communities, the combination of state and local sales taxes can add as much as 10 percent to grocery bills. Please find attached a list of all state sales tax rates on food.

Kansas is one of only 14 states that charge sales tax on food for home consumption. Most other states exempt food, or apply a much lower sales tax rate. Food is not a luxury item and increasing the state sales tax rate will only cause a heavier burden on low income Kansas families and children.

During the 2015 legislative session we have been working to support Senate Bill 263, which would exempt fruits and vegetables from sales tax. This would not only help to alleviate the tax burden for families at the grocery store, but would also incentivize healthier choices.

A poll paid for by the Kansas Health Foundation and administered by the Docking Institute at Fort Hays State University last summer showed that at **86.4% of Kansans support eliminating the sales tax on fruits and vegetables. Under HB 2429, Kansans get just the opposite; an even higher sales tax on food.** Further information in the graph attached shows the disproportionate affect this tax has on lower and middle income individuals.

KC Healthy Kids generally opposes increases in the state sales tax rate as it only adds to the tax burden Kansas families and children face on the most basic of necessities, like food. However, if the sales tax rate is to increased, we respectfully ask that the committee amend HB 2429 to reduce the sales tax rate on food to 6 percent or leave it where it currently stands at 6.15 percent. Food is not a luxury, but under this bill it will feel more like one for Kansas families.