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HB 2444, Committee on Taxation

Chairman Kleeb and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 2444 to lower the state sales tax rate to 2.6%. Cultivate Kansas City is non-profit aiming to strengthen local food systems by growing food, farms and community. A program of Cultivate Kansas City, Beans&Greens provides a dollar-for-dollar incentive to low-income consumers toward the purchase of additional fruits and vegetables when their federal food assistance dollars are spent at local farmers' markets.

### **Unfair Burden**

With a state sales tax on food of 6.5%, the Kansas state sales tax on food is the highest in the nation. Kansas' state tax on groceries puts an unfair burden on low-income families who already struggle to put fresh, affordable food on their table. According to a study of the Kansas Public Finance Center at Wichita State University, a family of 4 earning \$44,000, the median income in Kansas, pays *4 times* more of their income in taxes on groceries than does a household in the highest income level. These families already face barriers to fresh, affordable and healthy foods that include transportation issues, lack of proximity to full-service grocers, and unavailability of fresh food in the corner stores that so frequently comprise their only food access points.

### **Chronic Disease and Obesity-Related Healthcare Burden**

Because of this additional economic burden, families may choose to purchase less expensive, less nutritional food for their families. According to the Centers for Disease Control, *Kansas ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in consumption of fruits and vegetables*; this is a statistic that we do not want to reinforce with a high food sales tax. In a 2011 report, the CDC highlights that eating a diet high in fruits and vegetables is associated with a decreased risk of many chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, and some cancer.<sup>1</sup> A high state sales tax may contribute to poorer dietary choices and the subsequent economic burden that chronic disease and obesity exact on State finances.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the committee support House Bill 2444.

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Strategies to Prevent Obesity and Other Chronic Diseases: The CDC Guide to Strategies to Increase the Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2011.

