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President & CEO
Harvesters—The Community Food Network
HB 2444, Committee on Taxation

Chairman Kleeb and members of the Committee:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of Harvesters—The Community Food Network, the regional food bank serving northeast Kansas. Our nonprofit network includes more than 300 charitable organizations providing food assistance to hungry and food insecure children, seniors and adults in 16 Kansas counties.

Harvesters supports HB 2444. At a time when 14.5% of Kansans are food insecure and an alarming 22.3% of Kansas children are food insecure, lowering the cost of food would help the most vulnerable among us meet their basic needs.

We know from Feeding America's *Hunger in America 2014* study that Kansans living on limited household incomes are making difficult choices. Of those coming to our network of emergency feeding sites for assistance

- 65% have had to choose between paying for food or utilities
- 64% have had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine or medical care
- 53% have had to choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage

When people face such difficult choices, how do they cope? In Kansas, 81% report buying the cheapest food available regardless of its nutritional value. People know they should eat healthier, but when 10% or more of their food budget goes to pay for sales tax, they have to make the other 90% stretch farther. They often stretch their food dollar by purchasing cheaper, calorie-dense foods that have less nutritional value.

The sales tax on food is regressive and places a significant burden on our most vulnerable citizens. We ask for your careful consideration and vote in support of this bill that will help all Kansans have better access to the nutritious food they need to survive and thrive.

Harvesters' mission is to feed hungry people today and work to end hunger tomorrow.

