



TOPEKA/SHAWNEE COUNTY

HOMELESS TASK FORCE

To: Representative Emil Bergquist
Representative Doug Blex
Members of the House Committee on Local Government

Date: January 30, 2025

RE: HB 2099
Permitting periodic inspections by a city or county for code violations of private residential rental housing where the property owner is receiving governmental rental subsidies.

Representative Bergquist and Committee Members:

My name is Carrie Higgins, and I am here today in my capacity as the Continuum of Care Lead for Topeka/Shawnee County, to offer my support for House Bill 2099.

This bill is crucial because it alleviates the burden placed on tenants, particularly those in Shawnee County who are enduring substandard living conditions in rental properties that are receiving direct public financial assistance from a governmental entity. We have encountered numerous cases where tenants are living in deplorable conditions, yet their landlords fail to make necessary repairs. These tenants often hesitate to voice their concerns for fear of retaliation. Unfortunately, many feel trapped, unable to address the issue due to limited financial resources or viable housing alternatives.

In our work with the City of Topeka's Code Compliance Division, we often receive reports of these issues. When we ask tenants if they are willing to allow a code inspector to conduct an inspection, we find that many are reluctant to do so, fearing that the landlord will retaliate once they are aware of the complaint. This bill would allow the City of Topeka to take action to address housing code violations without placing the responsibility or risk on the tenant.

This bill would include:

- 26 HUD Funded Multifamily Properties
- 26 Kansas Housing Resource Corporation (KHRC) Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Properties
- 9 Topeka Housing Authority (THA) Public Housing Properties
- 194 THA & Topeka Housing Management Services (THMS) dwelling units.

Based on these figures pulled directly from HUD's website, this represents roughly 3,150 housing units in Topeka that the City would be able to have access to for inspections ensuring the quality and safety of housing in our community.

The Topeka/Shawnee County Continuum of Care strongly urges the passage of House Bill 2099 to protect the most vulnerable members of our community and ensure that landlords are held accountable for providing safe, habitable housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.