



March 17th, 2015

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HB 2399, Committee on Taxation

Chairman Kleeb and members of the Committee on Taxation –

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns about the increase in state sales tax to 6.3%. 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. We oppose the proposed changes; given it will increase the onerous tax burden Kansas families and children face on the most basic of necessities, like food.

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.

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 2399, Kansans get just the opposite; an even higher sales tax on food.**

We respectfully request that the committee oppose HB 2399, as currently drafted and instead support amendments to eliminate the sales tax on, at the very least, fresh foods and vegetables as proposed in SB 263. Food is not a luxury, but under this bill it will feel more like one for Kansas families.