



KANSAS APPLESEED
Justice for all.

February 1, 2018

JOEY HENTZLER,
CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR
Proponent
SCR 1604

Chairwoman Tyson and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 1604. Phasing down the food sales tax rate to two, will benefit millions of Kansans as well as Kansas businesses.

In Kansas, one in five children is food insecure,¹ meaning they do not have consistent access to a sufficient amount of healthy, affordable food. At 6.5 percent, Kansas has the one of the highest food tax rate in the nation. Once city and county tax rates are added, Kansas families pay as much as 10.5 percent in sales taxes on their groceries.² When high taxes drive up the cost of food, families with the most limited resources have no choice but to purchase unhealthy, low-cost food. As a consequence, obesity and health problems rise. Kansas's health ranking has declined from 8th to 27th in the U.S., partly due to the increase in obesity statewide.³ Low-income households in Kansas typically spend 11.1 percent of their income⁴ on groceries; a reduced food sales tax would allow them to spend hundreds of their dollars on more nutritious food instead of sales taxes.

Food insecurity negatively impacts a child's lifelong physical, mental and cognitive health. The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry published a study that found early malnutrition can affect a child's adult personality. According to this study, food insecure children are more likely to have higher levels of anxiety and lower levels of sociability or senses of competence. The study also found that food insecurity increases a child's risk of developing mental health issues.⁵ Healthy food in the hands of Kansans is an investment.

Kansas Appleseed's advocacy work puts us directly into contact with hardworking, low-income Kansas who struggle every day to put food on the table for themselves and their kids. Ashlee M., from Leavenworth, and her husband make too much for food assistance but eat cereal all month so their son can eat healthy fruits and vegetables. Monica H., from Wyandotte, has medical bills that make it incredibly difficult to feed her family. When we helped sign her up for food assistance, she shared her hope that her benefits will come in time for her son's birthday. She wanted to buy him a cake.

Lowering the sales tax on groceries will help moms like Ashlee and Monica across our state For these reasons, we ask the committee to support SCR 1604.

Respectfully submitted,

Joey Hentzler
Campaign Director
Kansas Appleseed

1 Feeding America, "Map the Meal Gap 2017" 2017

2 Kansas City Star, "Kansas lawmakers target state's high grocery tax." February 2016

3 KC Healthy Kids. "Change Kansas' Grocery Tax." 2017.

4 Kansas Center for Economic Growth. "A Guide to Comprehensive Tax Reform in Kansas." December 2016.

5 Rappler. "Hungry children: What happens to their behavior?" September 2015.