



February 19, 2020

Chairman Tarwater, and Members of the House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development, thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony on behalf of the Kansas Building Industry Association (KBIA) in support of HB 2703. KBIA is an affiliate of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) with nine local building associations and more than 2,000 members across the State of Kansas.

HB 2703, as introduced, would prohibit state agencies or local units of government from imposing construction standards more stringent than existing national model codes. In Kansas, for residential housing, these codes are adopted at the local levels by the city or county governments. Our builder and developer members work in partnership with these local officials to examine a national “one size fits all” model code, and then amend that to fit the conditions and needs of Kansas communities while continuing to provide for the safety and well-being of their citizens. On the whole, our members have good relationships with their local officials and the process works very well.

Unfortunately, what we have seen at the national level is a proliferation of attempts to prohibit, or mandate, specific construction materials for the construction of homes and businesses. Texas is a notable example where a number of cities began to adopt masonry standards requiring all, or a large portion, of their buildings to be constructed from brick or stone. With affordable housing a concern, this type of regulation can result in significant cost increases in residential housing. As a result the Texas legislature passed HB 2439, which is very similar to this bill, during their 2019 legislative session.

HB 2703, like that Texas legislation, would not apply to government buildings, historic districts, or home owners associations. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the other conferees to make amendments, if necessary, to clarify the application of this legislation, and to ensure that it does not conflict with K.S.A. 12-16,129 which is the current law prohibiting any mandate of fire sprinklers in residential structures.

Thank you for your consideration.

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Kansas Building Industry Association