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CHARLOTTE ESAU
14TH DISTRICT

Monday, February 24, 2020
Support for House Bill 2668, the Property Tax Relief Act

Chairman Johnson and members of the House Taxation Committee,

Thank you for considering this bill and hearing the reasons behind its development, and working with us to find a solution that will help provide some relief for rapidly escalating property values that are leading to tax increases beyond what our fixed income seniors and lower income citizens are able to absorb. Many seniors in my district tell me it is behind their decision to move out of state as soon as they reach retirement. This need to stop the bleeding – losing our seniors to out of state moves – and help those who have managed to buy a home but are living on lower incomes, led to the creation of SB2668.

I've fielded a number of "help, my taxes went up dramatically, what can you do" emails and letters, and just telling them how to protest the increased valuation, and talk to their local taxing authorities about lower mill levies in the future, isn't exactly what they want to hear. For a few, the options we have now for rebates could help, but the limits are so low it's not of much value in my district. For example, my own home has doubled in value in the 28 years since we built it, the property tax has also doubled, yet our income that was fine for paying the bill 28 years ago has not increased and as we are looking at retirement in the not-so-distant future, we wonder how we will pay our own tax bill just to stay in our home. The mill levy from 2015-2019 has only increased by 1.26%, yet the tax bill has increased by 25.32% in that same five-year period. This is the same thing I hear at door after door when campaigning as well. Medical costs have skyrocketed, taxes are doing likewise, and the only solution is to sell and move somewhere less expensive and live on the proceeds from the sale. Unfortunately, that doesn't usually mean they stay in Kansas, which is a loss to our communities and our tax base.

You will hear in other testimony more details regarding SB2668, how we intend for it to provide some tax relief for our seniors and lower income residents, and we look forward to working with all of you to find a solution we can offer this year while still meeting the revenue needs for the state general fund budget. I'll note we already have one amendment under consideration, as we want those filing joint returns to have their total taxable income cut in half before seeing what rebate they might be eligible to receive and are open to suggestions on how to best make that work.

Thank you and we look forward to your questions.

Rep. Charlotte Esau
District 14, Olathe/Lenexa