

The City of



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Date: February 5, 2020
To: Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation
From: Troy Tabor, City Council President, City of Andover, KS
Re: SB 294 –Opponent Testimony

To my esteemed colleagues in the state Senate on this committee, I thank you for your dedication to our communities and the state as a whole. I know there is an unending amount of important work that you're involved in, and I and my community thank you for dedicating your time and talents.

Today I come to you with a request to drop the proposed Senate Bill 294, as it is now. Providing clearer transparency of taxes can be done better, and the method outlined of reducing taxes is inappropriate.

It's not that we don't all agree that taxes are highly important, it's that the process outlined in this bill is overly burdensome, and complex enough that there is a very high potential to confuse our constituents, more than to enlighten them. I believe putting a fog in front of the transparency glass will have the opposite effect we're trying to achieve.

All of our communities are unique. Unique growth, unique in taxing needs, and even unique in how taxes are gathered. This is a great thing for our cities and our state. It allows us to be flexible with our individual needs, and managed by local neighbors elected to do the job. This type of bill has the appearance of an authoritarian government dictating how we do business, without the understanding or experience of managing a city. The exact reason we don't let the federal government write our state's laws.

If the voters in Andover think we aren't transparent, or that our taxes are out of bounds, they have the ability to talk with us directly, and they sometimes do. Once the facts of how taxes are calculated are provided, and more importantly how they are used, nearly no one has any further complaint.

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I believe we should always look for new ways to get information out to the public. Andover, as well as most communities you represent, already publish 100% of their budgets, tax revenues, and how taxes are spent in their cities. There are no secrets, as it should be. Those of you who have experience being on city councils for a couple of years or more know that most citizens do not care to read the material provided unless they have a direct concern. New mailers and meetings will make zero difference, other than costing cities a significant amount of new time, and tax dollars, to meet the requirements of this bill.

We are elected to understand our individual community's citizens needs and desires, and to execute their needs and desires! They know that costs money. They know that means paying taxes. And when there are concerns, there are several remedies they easily have at their disposal. From asking at city hall, to attending city meetings, or most importantly, at the election booth!

This bill will not help.

But, if we're looking for a better means of providing information to our citizens, there could be a standardized form sent out yearly in city bills, perhaps on different colored paper, but with the executive summary of the budget, tax revenue, city growth, and the right information to have a clear understanding of what their taxes are used for.

As to the proposed tax changes, this appears to be unvetted, burdensome, and written for a different state with different needs, and we can come up with something much better than this to claim a tax cut win.

I would offer my experience, time and talents to be a part of this committee if you wish.

Thank you for your time.