



**Testimony of Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health to the
House Committee on Taxation
Proponent for HB 2484 • January 25, 2022**

Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 2484 regarding the elimination of the state rate of sales and use taxes for sales of food and food ingredients. Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health is the public health department that serves community members living in Lawrence and Douglas County.

Food insecurity, or the lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life (as defined by the US Department of Agriculture), is a pervasive issue that has a deep impact on many Kansans and, as such, is a critical public health issue. Food insecurity and hunger are tied to poorer health outcomes and have an impact on Kansans' quality of life. Feeding America estimates that as many as one in five Douglas County community members is currently experiencing food insecurity. In response to a large community survey, we conducted in 2019 (prior to the pandemic), almost 10% of community members reported it was often or sometimes true that "the food I bought didn't last and I did not have money to get more." Reducing the amount of income our community members pay in food taxes may increase their resources to purchase adequate and healthy foods, resulting in less food insecurity or hunger.

Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health recognizes that not all Douglas County community members experience food insecurity. Food insecurity disproportionately impacts low-income families and children. The application of taxes to foods needed for health and well-being exacerbates challenges already experienced by low-income families and children.

As a local health department, we implement several programs, such as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and participate in collaborative efforts, such as the Douglas County Food Policy Council and LiveWell Douglas County, to address food insecurity and hunger among our residents. Additionally, our current policy agenda includes providing education on the impact of policies that would support reducing food insecurity and hunger. The elimination of state-level sales tax would reduce the cost burden on households, families, and children related to purchasing foods needed for health and well-being. HB 2484 would have a significant and positive impact on Douglas County and Kansas households, families, and children.

Sincerely,

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