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**Testimony by Rabbi Moti Rieber in Support of HB2720—Elimination of the Food Sales Tax
House Committee on Taxation, Rep. Adam Smith, chair**

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Mr. Chair, Ranking Member Gartner, members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber; I am executive director of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multifaith issue-advocacy organization that advocates on behalf of people of faith and the public regarding a number of important justice issues. We are the advocacy partner of tens of thousands of mainline Christians in Kansas, including the local judicatories of the ELCA Lutheran Church, the United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Diocese and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowships, as well as numerous Jewish and Muslim individuals. We are in support of HB2770, the elimination of the state sales tax on food.

One of KIFA's primary mission areas is addressing economic injustice and poverty. Part of what this means is that in general, more of the tax burden for society's needs should be borne by those with more capacity to pay it – those who have a larger share of financial blessings. The food sales tax is the opposite of this: people with lower incomes spend a higher percentage of their overall income on food, so this tax has a much greater impact on them proportionately than on people with higher incomes.

Another pressing issue is food insecurity. In Kansas, one in 8 Kansans, including 1 in 6 children., worry about having enough money to put food on the table. The food sales tax, by making food more expensive, adds to this problem. Eliminating it will help poor and working Kansans put food on the table.

In previous years it was hard to argue for the elimination of this tax, despite the moral issues involved, because to do so would be to damage Kansas' fragile economic recovery from the failed experiments of the past. I know that some people are concerned about how the APEX bill will affect state revenue. Kansas interfaith Action, however, supports putting tax relief for poor and working people first in this case. Is tired of always putting the interests of poor and working people lower on the priority list. With the state's current surplus, and with what seems to be bipartisan agreement, it is time for us to finally turn our attention to the ongoing injustice of the food sales tax.

We urge passage of a clean bill without muddying the issue with further tax cuts on higher earners and corporations. We are fine with the SNAP definition. However, we would support including food sold at farmers' markets in the legislation.

As taxes go, the food sales tax is one of the less-justifiable ones. It affects poor and working people more than better-off people, which is morally backwards. Now that Kansas is in a better position fiscally, this tax should be eliminated, in a clean bill without unnecessary complications, with the closest possible effective date. We urge this committee to pass this bill to the full House favorably for passage.

Thank you for your attention.