Kansas Statewide
Homeless Coalition

Proponent Testimony: HB 2768
Committee on Commerce
Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition
Molly Mendenhall

Chairman Tarwater and Members of this Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. My name is Molly Mendenhall and I am the Director of Statewide Initiatives for Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition. We are a not-for-profit organization that strengthens Kansas's cross-sector homeless response system through advocacy, education, and data-informed solutions aiming to make homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring. We are also the Collaborative Applicant for the Kansas Balance of State Continuum of Care (COC), which covers 101 Kansas Counties. We support HB 2768 because it will be instrumental in preventing homelessness in Kansas.

Times are tough across the board, and that is no different in Kansas. With the cost of living rising, including rents, groceries, and other basic necessities, Kansans are struggling to afford the things they need. Families with children, veterans, and the elderly who may be on strict budgets have to choose between rent, utilities, and food. HB 2768 will help to relieve some of the financial pressure on Kansas households.

HB 2768 will bring rental standards in line with mortgage standards by requiring landlords to accept multiple payments and payments from outside sources, including family, friends, or non-profits. Mortgage lenders are already required to accept multiple payments, standardizing this practice across everyone accessing housing benefits the renters, the landlords, and the rental market. Renters benefit by being able to keep their housing stable, affording necessities, and not being saddled with the burden of an eviction when they are trying their best to make ends meet. This bill does not impact a landlord's ability to file for eviction if a client is not paying rent but instead affords the renter's grace while preserving landlord rights.

Accepting multiple payments benefits Kansas landlords, too. Landlords can retain their tenants longer, ensuring steady income, even if it is broken into partial payments throughout the month. This bill will also save landlords on eviction filing, court, and attorney fees. By accepting multiple payments and payments from 3rd party sources, fewer evictions will be necessary or warranted.

This bill will also reduce strain on local resources like law enforcement, who are the ones who carry out evictions. This leaves law enforcement officers free to handle crime and public safety issues. In addition to decreasing the strain on law enforcement, local non-profits and churches who assist households with rent and utility assistance will be able to increase the number of households they can serve with the same amount of funds.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony in support of HB 2768. I am happy to answer and questions the committee may have.