Andrea Durate-Rambo | 8805 W. 118th St | Overland Park

Proponent Testimony on SB 397
Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee – 2/10/26

My name is Andrea Duarte-Rambo. My address is 8805 W 118th Street Overland Park, Kansas in Johnson County.

I am nobody important-just a 73-year-old widow, a mom of 8 and grandma of eleven from Kansas. I am a worship/music leader at my Church and work part time whenever I can just to help with food or medicine. And I have deep love for this State and each of you. It must be so hard for those in positions of authority and government to try and lead us right now. I can only pray that God gives you the courage and strength to do the jobs to which you have been called and to thank you for your willingness to do them even in a "time such as this."

Two of my sons have special, ongoing and serious medical needs. One at age 32, had seven massive strokes. He became unresponsive and at one point, we were told to say goodbye to him. He did survive but the strokes left him paralyzed over half of his body, legally blind, in a wheelchair, with a seizure disorder that can be life threatening. He spent three months inpatient. I am his Durable Power of Attorney which should say a lot. But I am so grateful.

My other special needs son suffered a traumatic brain injury at age 8. For a long period of time, he was misdiagnosed and led to him essentially losing his childhood. Eventually, it was discovered that he had a brain injury from an accident while in the care of his older siblings who were too afraid of telling anyone about the accident out of fear of "getting into trouble." Once properly diagnosed and treated, he is getting better, but he will never be the same. While the improvement is nothing short of a miracle, I am his guardian and conservator.

The reason I am telling you this story is that you can only imagine the cost both financially and emotionally for legal, transportation and medical expenses. The Safe Sr program, which I use, has been critical for me to be able to afford my annual property tax bill the past several years, along with any small savings I might have been able to put aside despite all our medical and legal expenses.

I knew that if I could just keep my property tax current no matter how hard the struggle, that even with severe financial difficulties some years, that we would still be able to have a home. Outside of the Lord and our family, it is really all we have as you can imagine.

This past year, I called the State of Kansas Treasurer's office for help filling out my state taxes and was told by one of the representatives that next year I would probably not be able to claim the Safe Sr anymore.

She said that to receive that refund the home itself must be valued at less than $350,000 and that my newest appraisal was around $349,000. Johnson County, like many others, has been raising the rates of home values by substantial amounts, which I know you are all working on capping. There is nothing I can do about these appraisal increases, but due to the current program's limitations, I will soon be unable to pay my property tax bill.

That left me terrified, and I know I am not alone in facing this crisis. This program was designed just for people like us who have a unique story, and we shouldn't fear being made homeless simply because the appraisal goes up.

This short and simple bill fixes the issue by removing the danger of having an appraisal increase –over which we have no control - remove me and others like me from this worthwhile program. This short and simple fix will help keep us and others like us in our homes.

That's why I'm deeply appreciative of the compassion shown by each of you who have heard my story, worked on this bill, introduced it, and provided the hearing on it today.

Most of all, thank you for inviting me to share my story and I hope you will do what you can to make this bill become law.

In closing, I cannot help but tell you that this is not the first time I have been blessed by this very Senate. A previous senator once sat on the steps of the Capitol here in Topeka during rain, snow and bitter cold to find help for my son with the Traumatic Brain Injury I mentioned earlier. So, please know that the seemingly little things you do, like this bill, can make a life changing difference in the lives of the people you serve.

To some, I may be a "nobody", which makes it even more breathtaking that busy, important respected leaders like yourselves care enough to listen to one small mom and grandma from Kansas.

Thank you again!

Andrea Duarte-Rambo