Written Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 415
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Remote Location: Garden City, KS

Chair and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 415. Kansas law already says that landlords are responsible for providing safe and habitable housing. The problem is that, when landlords fail to meet that responsibility, renters and local governments have very few practical tools to hold them accountable. SB 415 helps close that gap.

Under current law, when rental property becomes uninhabitable, it is often the tenants, many of whom have paid rent on time and followed the rules, who bear the consequences. They are forced to leave their homes on short notice, cover moving and storage costs, miss work, and try to secure new housing in an already tight market. Meanwhile, landlords who allowed conditions to deteriorate often face little meaningful consequence.

We have seen this play out repeatedly in Kansas.

In **May 2025, residents of Aspen Place Apartments** in Gardner were given just 48 hours' notice to vacate after the property was condemned. Families were displaced almost overnight because basic habitability issues were not addressed. Tenants were left scrambling for housing with few options to recover lost rent or relocation costs.

In **August 2024, Timberlee Apartments** in Topeka were condemned after inspectors found serious safety issues, including a carbon monoxide leak and raw sewage. At least 18 residents were relocated due to conditions that posed immediate health and safety risks. Again, tenants paid the price for a landlord's failure to maintain the property.

These are not isolated incidents. They reflect a broader pattern in which renters have rights on paper but no realistic way to enforce them.

SB 415 provides a reasonable and targeted solution. By applying the Kansas Consumer Protection Act when a landlord's action or inaction renders a unit uninhabitable, this bill gives renters access to meaningful remedies. It allows tenants to recover attorney fees and damages, making enforcement possible, not just theoretical. It also allows the Attorney General or a district attorney to step in when necessary, rather than placing the entire burden on individual renters.

This bill is not about punishing responsible landlords. It is about accountability when basic health and safety standards are ignored. Safe housing should not depend on whether a tenant can afford an attorney or absorb sudden displacement costs.

SB 415 recognizes that housing is not just a contract, it is where people live, raise families, and try to stay stable. When landlords fail to meet their obligations, Kansas law should offer real protection, not empty promises.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support SB 415.

Thank you for your time and consideration.