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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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STEPHEN OWENS  
74TH DISTRICT

Chairman Adam Smith  
House Committee on Taxation  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Topeka, KS 66612

February 1, 2023

RE: Testimony in **SUPPORT** of HB 2066 – Property Tax Exemptions for Fire / EMS

Chairman Smith & Members of the Committee:

As a former volunteer firefighter and EMT of the Hesston Volunteer Fire / EMS of over 17 years and current member of the Kansas Forest Service Advisory Task Force, I come to you in support of HB 2066. This bill, if passed, can be our community's way of thanking thousands of volunteer fire and EMS workers across the state who serve so willingly, without pay.

Simply put, our communities are in crises. More than 80% of fire and EMS services across the state of Kansas are volunteer. These individuals are putting their life on the line to save ours regularly and repeatedly. Not only do they deserve a resounding THANK YOU, but their numbers are dwindling. Just in my district alone, the Sedgwick EMS Department has been shuttered do too a lack of staffing. This puts increase burden on Halstead EMS to cover those calls. Burrton EMS now covers Buhler since their department was shuttered. Now, Burrton is struggling to fill vacancies which is proving impossible.

This legislation is meant as a way for our city, counties and state to offer some form of compensation to retain and to motivate volunteers. Below is a breakdown of where the property tax on vehicles is applied is as follows:

|                  | Property Tax Only | Registration Fee Only | Property Tax and Registration Fee Combined |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--|
| State            | 1.3%              | 90.6%                 | 32.7%                                      |
| Counties         | 32.8%             | 9.4%                  | 24.5%                                      |
| Cities           | 22.4%             | 0.0%                  | 14.5%                                      |
| School Districts | 35.7%             | 0.0%                  | 23.1%                                      |
| All Others       | 7.8%              | 0.0%                  | 5.0%                                       |

Kansas Legislative Research with the help of the Kansas Department of Revenue estimates the average property tax bill per year is \$205. There are currently approximately 18,000 volunteer fire and EMS members in the state of Kansas. That averages to 171 per county. That would be an annual cost of \$70,110. If you split that according to the chart above, each

entity will contribute roughly \$24K per year for two vehicles per household to be property tax free. While not an insignificant number, it is certainly a far cry better than not having fire or EMS responding in a timely fashion during your emergency!

Thank you for your consideration of HB 2066.

*Stephen Owens*

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