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Rabbi Moti Rieber, Executive Director
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Written Testimony by Rabbi Moti Rieber in Opposition to HB 2061 – Flat Tax Bill
House Committee on Taxation, Rep. Adam Smith, Chair
February 14-15, 2023

Mr. Chair, members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony this morning. My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber; I am executive director of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multi-faith issue-advocacy organization that “puts faith into action” by educating, engaging and advocating on behalf of people of faith and the public regarding critical social, economic and climate justice issues. I write today in opposition to HB2061.

The first and most important role of state government is to ensure that the people of our state have what they need to survive and thrive. This includes fully funded public schools, a functioning social safety net without onerous wait lists, capacity to respond to disasters, upgraded IT for our departments, to name just a few. These are not optional; they are requirements -- the absolute least that the state must do – a sacred trust between our residents and our government.

It was only a little over 10 years ago that Kansas embarked on an ill-considered and unwise course of income tax cuts. The damage that “experiment” caused – to our public education system, to the functioning of our state government, to the health and well-being of our residents – was profound, and we have only recently succeeded in putting this failure behind us. The last thing we need right now is a massive experiment with a new tax system that would amount to another round of tax cuts to primarily benefit the wealthiest 20% and would also blow a hole in the state budget to the tune of **\$1.5 billion each year**. This would destroy the state’s ability to sustain the services and programs that Kansas families rely on. We’ve been down this road before.

If the legislature wants to make our tax system more fair, there are plenty of ways do so: expand Medicaid; speed the elimination of the food sales tax; expand the earned income tax credit; lower Kansas’ reliance on fees and fines; implement paid medical and family leave; raise the minimum wage. These are all ways to help working Kansans and the poor and to spread our collective tax responsibility more fairly.

This legislature’s highest priority should be guaranteeing the functioning of state government and the well-being of our citizens – funding public education, funding necessary services, and caring for our neighbors. The flat tax is a boondoggle that will benefit the best-off among us at the expense of the state’s ability to function for everyone else. Please vote against HB 2061.