



United Community Services of Johnson County

Written-Only *Proponent* Testimony Regarding House Bill 2636

Kristy Baughman, Executive Director of United Community Services of Johnson County

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Executive Director

Kristy Baughman

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 Kristy Baughman, Executive Director
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Chair Smith and Members of the House Committee on Taxation:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide **proponent testimony regarding House Bill 2636**, a bill that extends the homestead property tax refund to include eligible renters.

United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) is a nonprofit agency committed to supporting policies, programs, and services that are invested in the success of our community’s most vital resource – its people.

Kansas across the state are facing increasing housing costs. The American Community Survey indicates that 27% (nearly 400,000) of all Kansan households rent their homes and nearly **half** of Kansas renters are spending more than 30% of their gross income on housing. *When families pay increasingly larger proportions of their income on housing, they experience negative health impacts. These may include foregoing basic medical care, moving frequently or facing evictions, high stress levels that impact physical and mental health, long commute times, limited money for healthy foods, and a lack of quality social connections with family and friends.*

Overwhelmingly, Kansans are worried about the cost of housing. In the October 2023 *Kansas Speaks* Survey completed by the Docking Institute in Leavenworth, 71.6% of Kansas said they were worried about the cost of housing in *their* communities and 67% indicated they would personally struggle to find an affordable home in their community.

Access to safe, stable, attainable housing is key to the health and wellbeing of a vital and productive Kansas workforce.

Property taxes represent a significant cost-burden for many households, including renters, who are, through their rent, paying property tax. Property tax relief combats rapidly rising home values, helping families, especially those on fixed incomes, stay housed.

When Kansans, including renters, are able to remain housed, then all Kansans benefit: businesses retain quality employees, local governments see fewer strains on social services, law enforcement, and hospitals, and children retain access to quality care and education – building the workforce of tomorrow.

UCS advocates to support safe, stable, attainable housing for all Kansans and supports HB 2636 as an effort to support affordable housing options across the state.

