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To: Senate Judiciary Committee
From: Mark Tomb, VP of Governmental Affairs
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Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2378

On behalf of the Kansas Association of REALTORS® (KAR), thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2378. This legislation would establish the Removal of Squatters Act that creates an expedited removal process for those unlawfully remaining on a property in certain circumstances.

KAR represents nearly 11,000 members involved in residential, commercial and agricultural real estate and has advocated on behalf of the state's property owners for more than 100 years. REALTORS® serve an important role in the state's economy and are dedicated to working with our elected officials to create better communities by supporting economic development, a high quality of life and providing affordable housing opportunities while protecting the rights of private property owners.

Squatting is on the rise across the country, and owners are increasingly returning to their vacant properties to discover that squatters have broken in, made themselves comfortable, and are refusing to leave. This legislation is based on legislation that passed recently in Florida and Alabama to expedite the process to remove an unlawful occupant when they clearly have no legal connection to a property.

This legislation is focused on removing individuals that lack a legal connection to a property while not interfering with landlord-tenant relationships or family disputes. By removing squatters, we are not only ensuring that the property is returned to its rightful owner, but also reducing the dangers posed to both those living in such conditions and the neighboring residents. Allowing squatters to remain in buildings without any formal connection to the property disrupts neighborhoods and communities. It fosters environments where criminal activity and illegal behavior can thrive. Squatters may attract vandalism, theft, and other forms of unlawful activity, and in some cases, may contribute to further deterioration of the building, reducing the overall property values of the area.

Property owners rely on the income generated by their buildings or intend to use them for future development. When squatters occupy these properties, it often renders them unusable, leading to lost revenue, higher costs associated with repairs, legal battles, and reduced property values. Removing squatters in an expedited manner helps ensure that property owners can use their property as intended, which, in turn, supports local economic growth and community revitalization efforts.

We request the Senate Judiciary Committee support HB 2378 as a reasonable solution to remove squatters in a more expedited manner. Thank you for your time and consideration of our testimony.