

Good Day, Senators McGinn and Bowers:

My name is Cindy Enriken. I live in Wichita but grew up in Lincoln, Kansas. Currently I own four properties in Lincoln which I purchased to save from demolition and further decay. I am working to rehab my first property. My goal is to rehab and return all of them to the community to provide more safe, affordable housing, because Lincoln, like so many rural communities, has a shortage of decent housing.

I'm writing to you in your capacity as Chair and Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Local Government to urge you and the committee to kill HB 2083, the vacant property registration act.

The districts you represent are composed of several small communities which are all struggling with the problem of dilapidated, vacant buildings. Each of those buildings is not only an eyesore for the communities in which they are located but they represent a loss in property tax revenue for those municipalities - a loss that the communities can ill afford. Beyond that each run-down building is a lost opportunity to add another home or commercial building for use.

As you and I know, there are thousands of responsible property owners who believe in maintaining and enhancing their investments. They know that their properties provide value to the communities in which the properties are located.

But we also know of property owners who don't care about their properties nor do they care about the neighborhoods or the communities in which the properties are located. Their sole concern is their financial bottom line but they conceal that concern under the rubric of "the rights of the property owner."

A vacant property registration ordinance with a fee component is one of the very few effective tools available to a community to combat blight. Removing that important tool weakens the community and increases the likelihood that blight will spread into areas not yet affected. Once blight moves in (think of it like rust) we see the slow decline of the area, the loss of tax revenues, and the beginning of decline in infrastructure and services when there's not enough money to pay for everything that's needed to keep a community healthy.

While I was opposed to HB2083 as it was originally written, I'm even more opposed to the amended version now before your committee. New wording inserted in Section 1(3) states that a municipality cannot "impose any responsibility of property ownership, such as repair, maintenance or security, on a legal or equitable mortgagee or lienholder," wording likely inserted at the behest of the Kansas Bankers Association. According to the supplemental note "banks and other financial institutions are being considered as the owners of vacant properties and being assessed fees by cities before the financial institution can legally care for or sell the property." Yet, I know of no Kansas community that has assessed fees on a bank or lienholder because the purchaser was negligent in maintenance or repair.

Beyond that, I can't imagine a situation where a lienholder would be okay with allowing a property it had financed to decay and lose value.

My last objection to HB2083 as amended is that wording has been added making the bill retroactive by stating that "Any provision of any ordinance, resolution or regulation that requires the payment of any tax, fee or other charge that is prohibited by subsection (c) that was adopted prior to July 1, 2023, shall be null and void." It's the fee which gives vacant property registry the strength necessary so that owners are more likely to improve their decaying properties or sell them to someone who will

improve them.

You and the members of your committee care about the best interests of all Kansans and of all Kansas communities. It is not in the best interest of any Kansas community for vacant properties to continue their downward spiral of decay. It's not in the best interest of Kansas communities to lose property tax revenue which is needed to maintain and enhance those communities.

Communities, residents, you and your neighbors will not benefit if HB 2083 passes. My hometown of Lincoln won't benefit. Nor will any of the other Kansas communities who have yet to enact vacant property registration ordinances and who are fighting to overcome decay and blight.

I would be happy to answer any questions you have. You may reach me at this email address.

Best Regards.

Cindy Entriiken

Wichita, Kansas

Cindy Entriiken

*author of **Ila's War**, a WWII memoir. You can find it at:*

www.amazon.com/author/cindyentriiken