

To: House Committee on Taxation
Rep. Adam Smith, Chair

From: Allison Marker, Director of Community Engagement, YWCA Northeast Kansas

Re: **HB 2111 - Establishing a 0% state rate for sales and use taxes for food and food ingredients, providing a sales tax exemption for children's diapers and feminine hygiene products.**

Date: February 7, 2023

YWCA Northeast Kansas is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all through various programs including the Early Learning Center, the YWCA Center for Safety and Empowerment, the YWCA Leadership Academy, and racial justice and advocacy programming which served over 13,999 women, children, and individuals in Shawnee, Jackson, Brown and Wabaunsee counties in 2020. If you or someone you know needs help, please call the 24-hour crisis line: 1-888-822-2983.

Good afternoon. My name is Allison Marker, and I am the Director of Community Engagement at YWCA Northeast Kansas. On behalf of our organization, I want to thank Chairman Smith and members of the Committee for hearing testimony on this bill, which would provide crucial relief to the over 13,000 women and families we serve in Brown, Jackson, Shawnee, and Wabaunsee counties.

YWCA Northeast Kansas provides transformative and empowering services and programs for families in need of affordable childcare as well as survivors of domestic and sexual violence, stalking, and human trafficking. For these women and families, every penny matters. They're facing extraordinary challenges, and you're in a position to help.

In Kansas, the cost of childcare is more than the cost of in-state college tuition,¹ often more than the cost of rent. And the cost of groceries increased 13.5 percent in 2022.² A recent study found that almost half of Kansas households are making the difficult choice between food and utilities or medical care.³ Families are watching every penny, and they need relief now in the form of cutting the state sales tax for these basic necessities – groceries, diapers, and period products.

Furthermore, organizations like YWCA that serve women and girls are historically – and radically – underfunded, receiving less than 2 percent of charitable giving in 2019.⁴ HB2111 is one way to move the needle on the work that we do by easing the burden on our organization's supporters and donors who help us stock our pantry with canned goods and period products.

Our Day Center is a program of the YWCA Center for Safety and Empowerment, where we provide drop-in services to victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and in this space, primarily human trafficking. In 2022, we served 350 clients in our Day Center, where they receive one-on-one case management, utilize our computer lab, do a load of laundry, rest or take a nap, take a shower, and cultivate community with fellow victims/survivors in a space just for them. Many of our clients who access our Day Center struggle to have their most basic needs met, and we are here for them to ensure that they are seen, heard, and have access to food and hygiene items. I brought one of our "go bags" with me that we provide to clients.

These contain your most basic necessities: socks, shampoo, a toothbrush, deodorant, high protein snacks and canned food items with a pull tab (so you don't need a can opener). We can't address our clients' deeper needs such as mental health support, housing, and safety without first addressing these most basic needs that begin the process of restoring dignity. That's why at YWCA we are committed to our mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and DIGNITY for all.

Today, with this mission and the women, survivors, and families of Kansas in mind, YWCA Northeast Kansas advocates at the federal, state, and local levels for practical solutions that meet the needs of women, girls, and marginalized communities.

We know that women are the primary source of financial support for many families and bear significant caretaking responsibilities at home. In 2021, 28.9% of households with children in Shawnee County were single-parent households.⁵ Our Early Learning Center, Kids Quest, and FEATS before and after school programs serve working families who often rely on safety net programs such as SNAP and TANF to make ends meet.

At YWCA, we believe no one should have to choose between their livelihoods and their health, their family, or their safety. Yet because of their dual roles as caregivers and primary breadwinners, many women in the workforce, particularly women of color, are often forced to choose between their family's economic security and their health when they or their loved ones need care.

We can't address the deeper needs of victims and survivors of human trafficking in our Day Center such as mental health support, employment, housing, and safety without first addressing these most basic needs that begin the process of restoring dignity. That's why we're committed to advocating for policy changes, like House Bill 2111, which would provide direct relief to the thousands of families in our community who are looking to you, our state legislators, for relief from the extraordinary rise in basic household costs these past few years. We urge you to pass House Bill 2111 and deliver that relief now. Thank you for the opportunity to share YWCA's support of this legislation with the Committee.

¹ Center for Science, Technology & Economic Policy (CSTEP) Institute for Policy & Social Research, The University of Kansas, *The Status of Women in Kansas*, Feb 2022

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *The Economics Daily*, Prices for food at home up 13.5 percent for year ended August 2022 at <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2022/prices-for-food-at-home-up-13-5-percent-for-year-ended-august-2022.htm>

³ University of Missouri Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security, *Food Assistance & Hunger in the Heartland 2021: State Report for Kansas*, June 2022

⁴ Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, *The Women & Girls Index 2022*
<https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/institutes/womens-philanthropy-institute/research/wgi22.html>

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/S1101SPHOUSE020177>