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**Testimony by Reverend Oglesby-Dunegan in support of Comprehensive Tax Reform February 14, 2017; Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee
In support of SB 188**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. My name is Rev. Sarah Oglesby-Dunegan, and I am the Chair of the Board of Trustees for Kansas Interfaith Action. We are 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 and economic justice issues. I am here today in support of comprehensive tax reform for Kansas.

Tax reform for Kansas is an urgent moral issue. The tax reforms made in 2012 and 2013 were touted as a great experiment that would lift Kansas economically and bring jobs and a thriving economy. While many of us knew this would not be the case, the state’s leaders pursued these changes anyway. Since then we have watched as the programs and services meant to reach Kansas’ most vulnerable populations are depleted by lack of funding, while low income and working families have shouldered the burden through increased sales taxes even on items needed for basic survival, like food, and the loss of important tax benefits such as the homestead exemption for renters and the child care tax credit. Our communities are suffering from multiple levels of deferred maintenance for important elements of our common infrastructures of municipalities, counties and the state.

Jesus admonished us to see each other as conduits of God’s spirit and presence in the world by taking care of one another. Tax policies that have unfairly burdened the poor and lessened the responsibility of those in the upper income brackets are immoral. We need to make sure that all Kansans have access to the resources to meet their basic needs—and without tax reforms we cannot adequately fund the programs and services that make sure that children’s needs are met, that public education and health care needs are met and perform with excellence, that our communities are able to function and thrive. For when we can do this, “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ Let us be sure the answer is not that we did nothing, witnessing suffering and unmet without compassion or action. (Matthew 25:37-41).

We need you to address three aspects of our tax policy to restore fairness and a moral frame of responsibility and care: 1) reinstate taxes on pass-through income 2) repeal the “glide path to zero”, or ratchet mechanism and 3) restore the three-tier income tax system and the higher rates on higher incomes. Unless and until we do, we leave too many with too little and gain nothing. 4) reinstate the homestead exemption for renters.

With respects and gratitude for your time,

Rev. Sarah Oglesby-Dunegan

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