

619 Ann Avenue
Room 321
Kansas City, KS 66101
(913) 573-8833



Healthy Communities
W Y A N D O T T E

To: Sen. Elaine Bowers, Chair of Ethics, Elections and Local Government
From: Gretchen H. Kunkel, Chair of Healthy Communities Wyandotte Policy Committee
Date: January 23, 2017
Re: Written testimony in support of SB31

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 31.

I am writing on behalf of Healthy Communities Wyandotte (HCW), a coalition of more than 100 organizations and individuals dedicated to creating a healthier Wyandotte County. The members of our coalition are just as likely to be associated with health clinics and hospitals as they are with schools and neighborhood groups. These members recognize that the “social determinants” of health—the conditions in which people live, learn, work, and play—have a strong impact on the health of a community. Poverty is one of those social determinants, linked to higher rates of death and disease.

The blight in our community contributes to this poverty, and to poor health outcomes, by creating unsafe and stressful conditions that many of our residents live in. The blighted and abandoned structures in our community quickly fall into disrepair, depress property values, provide a haven for criminal activities, and create unsafe environments for children to play in. Equally important, they contribute to the stress of the residents who must live in these unattractive and unsafe environments.

We support Senate Bill 31 because it would give Wyandotte County officials, along with officials in other distressed communities in Kansas, a powerful tool to eliminate these unhealthy and unsafe conditions. This legislation would streamline and expedite the process our local government and neighborhood organizations use to deal with the blight of abandoned, nuisance, and foreclosed housing. And it would give our residents a reason to take pride in their community.

For these reasons, we urge the members of the Ethics, Elections, and Local Government Committee to support Senate Bill 31. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gretchen H. Kunkel".

Gretchen H. Kunkel

..... HCW: Mobilizing the community to improve health and well-being in Wyandotte County through increased communication, coordination, and culture change.