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To: House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

From: Danielle Young, City Administrator/Clerk, Cheney, Kansas

Subject: Testimony in Support of HB 2314

Date: Friday, February 22, 2019

The City of Cheney supports HB 2314 and legislation to streamline and expedite the process for local governments, neighborhood organizations and private businesses to deal with the blight of abandoned, nuisance, and foreclosed property.

Property owners and residents of rental property deal with the health, safety and welfare of our neighborhoods and community being placed in jeopardy by abandoned and dilapidated properties.

The City of Cheney has dealt with several homes over the past year that are abandoned and/or blighted. In particular, one property has been abandoned for 5 years and sits directly next to our Elementary School. Every day, over 300 elementary students and parents have had to deal with the issues at the abandoned property ranging from tall grass, junk, rodents, feral cats, abandoned vehicles, and illegal dumping. In addition, nearby neighbors must also deal with the deterioration of the house as shingles and siding blows off in the Kansas wind onto their yards and into the street.

This particular property, as well as other blighted and abandoned properties, creates additional work for various City departments including law enforcement, fire personnel, maintenance/public works, code enforcement, and administration. As we field numerous complaints from citizens, deal with rodents making homes upon the interior and exterior of the property, and keep the property mowed so the grass/weeds do not exceed 12" in height, our city's resources are being stretched thin. Dozens of individuals have contacted the City to find property owner contact information wishing to purchase the abandoned property to rehab the home, since very few homes are for sale within our community; however, after years of abandonment the home now appears to be beyond rehabilitation which will only increase costs for the next owner.

City of Cheney residents are not the only people affected by blighted and abandoned property, as these issues affect cities of all sizes across Kansas. 89% of members within the League of Kansas Municipalities indicated abandoned or blighted property was a significant or very significant concern for their communities and that the median length of time a property was reported as abandoned was four years. An alarming one-third of the respondents noted they have properties that have been abandoned for over 10 years.

HB 2314 would give cities the resources to deal with abandoned and blighted property and allow the rehabilitation action be taken before the property becomes a 'dangerous structure'.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 2314.

Danielle Young
City Administrator
City of Cheney, Kansas

Enclosure: Photo of abandoned property across from Cheney Elementary School with missing shingles and abandoned vehicles on property

