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To: House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee
From: Mark Tomb, VP of Governmental Affairs
Date: March 17, 2021

Re: Testimony in Support of SB 90

On behalf of the Kansas Association of REALTORS® (KAR), thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 90, which would expand the types of projects included in a Rural Housing Incentive District (RHID). The legislation would specifically identify upper floor residential projects in downtown areas for inclusion in the RHID program. KAR has long supported the concept and the expansion of this important tool to increase affordable housing opportunities in rural areas.

KAR represents over 10,000 members involved in residential, commercial and agricultural real estate and has advocated on behalf of the state's property owners for 100 years. REALTORS® serve an important role in the state's economy and are dedicated to working with our elected officials to create better communities by supporting economic development, a high quality of life and providing affordable housing opportunities while protecting the rights of private property owners.

During the pandemic, sales of existing homes in most areas of the state have been fairly robust, but there exists an underlying issue with the market involving supply. The state's housing shortage has numerous causes and therefore will also not be solved by a one-size-fits-all approach. Multiple tools are needed to address varying situations. Tools and programs that work for urban areas may not be right for rural areas. The key is having multiple tools to fit the type and overall scope of a project.

Upper floor residential housing was once a very common component to downtowns in cities of all sizes. Renovating these often vacant or underutilized spaces can provide a win-win situation. Allowing RHIDs to be used for upper floor residential housing is a logical step to not only increase the supply and assortment of housing offered in a rural community but also as a tool to increase the vitality of downtown areas. Having a vibrant and active downtown tends to create additional economic development opportunities by building off previous successes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 90. KAR requests that the House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee act on SB 90 favorably.