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**TO: Senator Carolyn McGinn, Chair, and Members  
of the Local Government Committee**

**FROM: Colin McKenney, CEO, Starkey, Inc.**

**RE: Opposition to SB316**

Good morning, Madame Chair and members of the committee. I am Colin McKenney, and I have served as CEO of Starkey, Inc. for the past 10 years. Starkey provides daily support services in the homes of more than 200 individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities in and around Wichita. The majority of those individuals live in group homes that we own and maintain, and you would typically not be able to tell the difference between one of our homes in a neighborhood and any other as you are driving by.

While it is not clear whether the proposed amendments to KSA 12-736 apply to the homes where Starkey provides services, I am opposed to this bill even if it does not. The original language of KSA 12-736 states that it shall be the policy of the state of Kansas that persons with a disability shall not be excluded from the benefits of single family residential surroundings by any municipal zoning ordinance, resolution or regulation. I'm not sure that can still be the state's policy if the statute is amended to include the language in SB316.

I'm confident that others will provide input explaining how this bill is discriminatory and generally in conflict with fair housing requirements, so I will instead focus on the ways that it would affect our ability to provide appropriate housing and support services for individuals with disabilities:

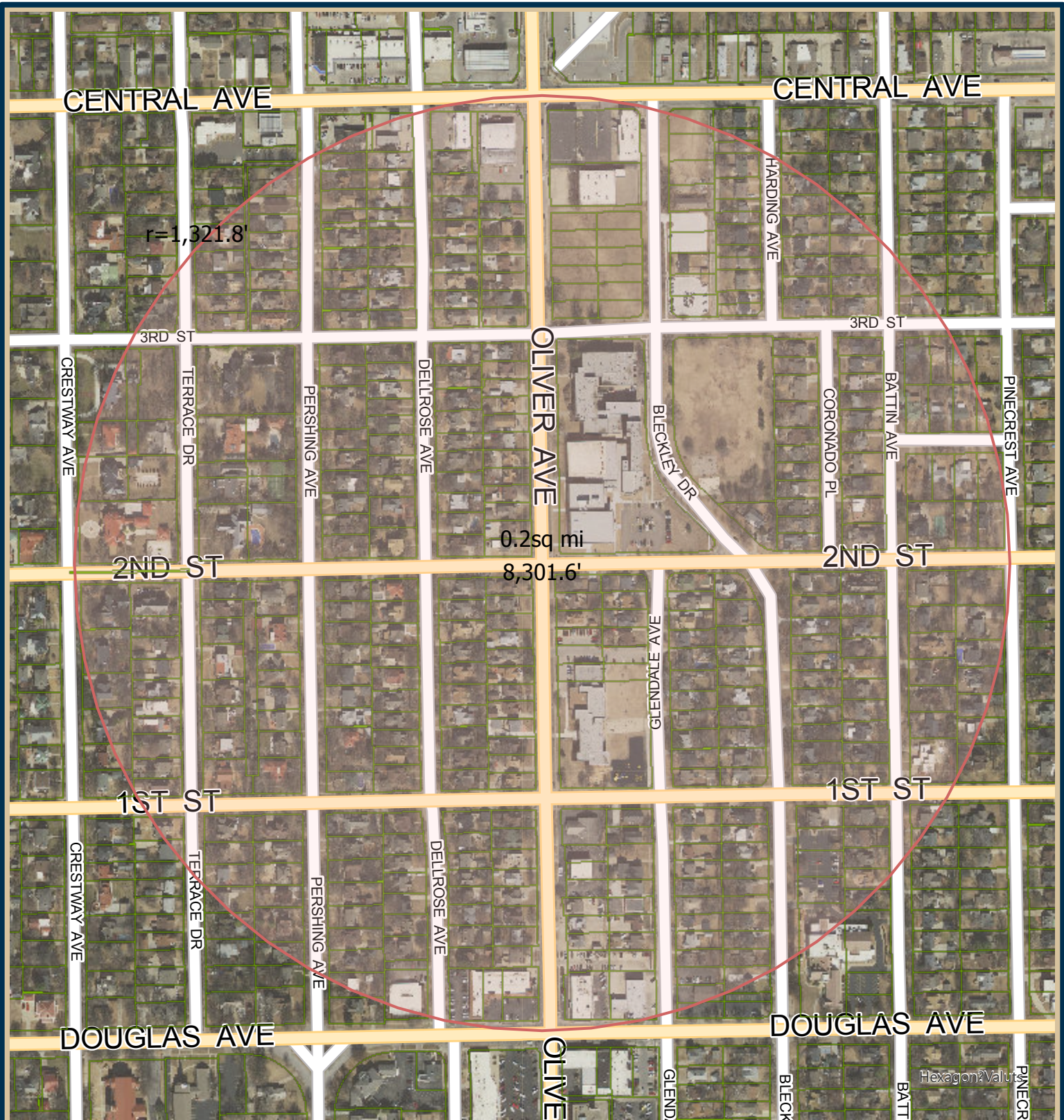
- It is not clear why one quarter mile was chosen as the minimum distance between group homes on or after July 1 of this year, but that distance can cover hundreds of homes, dozens of streets and several neighborhoods. If you refer to the map that is attached to my testimony, you will see that one quarter mile can include neighborhoods that are in no way connected to each other, and that would have no idea if a group home were located somewhere within the area.

- Knowing where group homes are located is another barrier to implementing this language. I'm not aware that any state or local entity actually knows where all group homes are located, so that would complicate compliance and oversight.
- Finding appropriate locations for group homes is already a challenging process based on cost, accessibility, available public transportation, safety and numerous other considerations. If you also apply a quarter-mile standard on top of all of those considerations, you have effectively closed off entire communities as potential locations for a home for individuals who need daily support.
- One of Starkey's more recent developments involved the use of tax-credit financing to develop duplexes on a vacant lot within quick access to shopping and services. There was a local oversight process to evaluate the appropriateness of our planned development, and changes were made to our plan based upon input from area neighbors. If our city would have taken action to prohibit placement of homes as indicated in this bill, our project would not have been possible and the affordable, accessible and attractive housing we constructed would not exist today.

I believe that all of those are good reasons why this bill should not pass, but I will add one more. There are times when it is much more feasible to provide appropriate staff support when homes are placed within walking distance of each other. Employees who work in the same neighborhood can help support each other reduce the potential impact that staffing shortage could have on critical services. We have plans to develop another vacant lot with more than one home and reached out to area neighbors before we purchased it to make sure that such development would not be perceived negatively. While the neighbors did not express any concerns, this bill could still prevent us from constructing new, accessible homes that make it possible for us to better serve individuals with disabilities.

Hopefully we will learn a bit more about the concerns that led to the introduction of this bill as part of today's hearing, but passing a bill like this that opens the door to blanket restrictions is not the way to address whatever those concerns may be. If there are homes that are not being operated according to licensing requirements, or are not being maintained to neighborhood standards, those are the issues to be addressed. Preventing vital housing options for people who need them, just because they could be received negatively by surrounding neighbors, is discriminatory and most likely fails to address the actual concerns that led to this bill.

Thank you for allowing me to share my concerns this morning, and I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.



It is understood that the Sedgwick County GIS, Division of Information and Operations, has no indication or reason to believe that there are inaccuracies in information incorporated in the base map.

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**Sedgwick County, Kansas**



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