



**Testimony re: HB 2818
House Committee on Commerce, Labor and Economic Development**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

My name is Joan Ruff and I am Chair of the United WE Board of Directors. As you may recall from previous sessions, the mission of United WE is to advance all women's economic and civic leadership.

On behalf of United WE, I'm pleased to testify today in support of HB 2818 and propose that an occupational regulation is carefully considered, prioritizing public benefit and the least restrictive measures to protect the general welfare.

This legislation aims to establish structured guidelines for evaluating proposals to regulate occupations not covered before July 1, 2024. By promoting transparency and informed decision-making, we aim to facilitate individuals' pursuit of their chosen professions without unnecessary government intervention.

We believe this would help create a culture of economic empowerment for women in Kansas. Our Status of Women in Kansas research report told us that women are more likely to hold a certification or license than employed men. For that reason, United WE works to remove barriers faced by women in professions that are governed by occupational licensing regulatory boards and frameworks. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, the Kansas economy can grow by 10-15% by the year 2025 if women are fully participating in the workforce. This legislation is a step in the right direction to position Kansas as an economic leader becoming the 15th state in the country to have such a provision.

HB 2818 is the right approach to facilitate more informed decision-making, prevent duplicative and unnecessary regulatory boards from being created, and create a more efficient occupational licensing structure for women entrepreneurs, employed professionals, and all Kansans. For example, currently salon owners who offer spray tanning services, but do not have a tanning bed at their site, are not required to hold a state license. This allows salon owners to tap into a growing market in a manner that does not pose a risk to public health and earn a living for their family. This example shows a balance between entrepreneurship and public welfare and this is the type of balance we hope to secure throughout the state's economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to share United WE's perspective on this bill. I am happy to answer any questions.