



City of Ottawa

101 S. Hickory
Ottawa, KS 66067

785.229.3600

www.ottawaks.gov

Opposition of SB 248

March 9, 2023

Honorable Chairperson Smith, Vice Chair Bergkamp and Ranking Member Sawyer:

Thank you for allowing this testimony on SB 248. I and my city, Ottawa, stand in strong opposition to this bill and the negative impacts it will cause for cities like Ottawa all across this state.

The elimination of the Ottawa Police Department, a twenty-seven mill increase to the property tax bill of an Ottawa citizen, the dissolution of the Ottawa Fire Department and the cancellation of every city employee's health benefit, these are the very real consequences if this bill passes as written. SB 248 would mean the **loss of \$3 million** in revenue and would leave the City to choose one of these three stark choices:

- THE ELIMINATION OF THE OTTAWA POLICE DEPARTMENT;
- THE DISSOLUTION OF THE OTTAWA FIRE DEPARTMENT AND THE CANCELLATION OF CITY OF OTTAWA'S EMPLOYEE BENEFITS INCLUDING HEALTH CARE BENEFITS;
- A PROPERTY TAX LEVY **INCREASE OF 27.25 MILLS**, an astounding **60% INCREASE** IN LOCAL PROPERTY TAXES FOR OUR CITIZENS.

As a Kansan, I respect the efforts to lighten the burden for citizens with this bill. Eliminating the local portion of food sales tax is not the method to accomplish this goal. Many of the components of our local sales tax base have been **voter approved**. For instance: in 2015, the Ottawa voters overwhelmingly approved a sales tax to build our new business park, Proximity Park, to bring industry, jobs, and prosperity to Ottawa. In 2001, the Ottawa voters approved a sales tax to build a new wastewater treatment facility—mandated by KDHE—in the City of Ottawa.

If SB 248 is signed into law, the bonds for these necessary and voter approved public improvements are at risk of default. Our city's credit rating, our community's future, and the will of the same voters who elected you, will be jeopardized and ultimately rendered worthless. It is our responsibility at all levels of government to preserve and protect the will of the voters and rights of the people.

I respectfully request you oppose SB 248 as long as this bill includes removal of the local food sales tax. This bill ignores the voice of the voters and the circumstances surrounding special taxing districts (TIFF, CID, etc.) which are designed to spur economic growth in rural areas of Kansas like mine.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide opposition testimony to SB 248.

Sara Caylor

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sara Caylor".

Ottawa City Commissioner
Past President League of Kansas Municipalities
Serving since 2011
scaylor@ottawaks.gov