

February 15, 2024

House Committee on Taxation
State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: Health Forward Foundation support for House Bill 2636 – extending the Homestead property tax refund to include eligible renters

Chair Smith and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Health Forward Foundation (Health Forward), I submit this letter of testimony in support of House Bill 2636. Health Forward works to support and build inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities characterized by racial equity and economically just systems. We support the expansion of the Homestead property tax to eligible renters. Safe, stable, affordable housing is a basic need and a human right for all Kansas residents. Where we live determines our physical and mental health, quality of life, access to education and economic outcomes. Kansans deserve safety and security in their housing choices.

Property taxes represent a significant cost burden for many households, including renters. Property tax relief helps with rising rent levels and home values, and the rising costs of food, utilities, and childcare. The expansion of the Homestead Property Tax to renters would support residents in their effort to sustain affordable housing.

Kansas is facing increasing housing costs. The [American Community Survey](#) indicates that 27% (nearly 400,000) of all Kansan households rent their homes and nearly half of Kansas renters are spending more than 30% of their gross income on housing. When families pay increasingly larger proportions of their income on housing, they experience negative health impacts. These may include foregoing basic medical care, moving frequently or facing evictions, high stress levels that impact physical and mental health, long commute times, limited money for healthy foods, and a lack of quality social connections with family and friends.

Overwhelmingly, Kansans are worried about the cost of housing. In the October 2023 [Kansas Speaks Survey](#) completed by the Docking Institute in Leavenworth, 71.6% of Kansas said they were worried about the cost of housing in their communities and 67% indicated they would personally struggle to find an affordable home in their community.

Access to safe, stable, attainable housing is key to the health and wellbeing of a vital and productive Kansas workforce. When Kansans, including renters, can remain housed, then all Kansans benefit: businesses retain quality employees, local governments see fewer strains on social services, law enforcement, and hospitals, and children retain access to quality care and education – building the workforce of tomorrow.

**OUR
PURPOSE**

Every day we work to support and build inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities characterized by racial equity and economically just systems.

We encourage the legislature to support ways to increase access to affordable housing in Kansas to ensure Kansans have the opportunity to live healthy and successful lives . Please feel free to contact me at rgibson@healthforward.org

Respectfully,

Robert Gibson, M.S, M.P.H.
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Health Forward Foundation

