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Testimony in Support of HB 2416
(Providing a sales tax exemption for area agencies on aging)

Chairman Smith and members of the Committee, I am Karen Wilson, Executive Director of the Northeast Kansas Area Agency on Aging in Hiawatha. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2416 to provide a sales tax exemption for eight of the Area Agencies on Aging in Kansas.

The Northeast Kansas Area Agency on Aging (AAA) was established in 1973 when the Older Americans Act (OAA) was amended to fund the agencies in response to the needs of older Kansans and to make it possible for them to age in place with appropriate home and community-based services. The Act requires local control and decision-making that allows AAAs to adapt to the unique demands of their communities. Our Agency provides core services, including in-home services, meals (congregate and home delivered), information and assistance, health promotion programs, and legal services. We serve an average of 3,500 older adults and their caregivers in the counties of Atchison, Brown, Doniphan, Jackson, Marshall, Nemaha, and Washington. The Older Americans Act designates AAAs as a unit of local government, private, or public nonprofit organization as in the eight of the AAAs HB 2416 references.

The **Northeast Kansas Area Agency on Aging supports HB 2416** for several reasons, one of which is related to the quasi-public organization definition, where roughly 90% of our funding is derived from the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) for our core services; and Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), which funds our transportation program: a first come, first serve, on-demand supplemental program in response to meeting an identified community need. Last year, NEKAAA provided 6,822 rides to 336 riders. Receiving KTA awards since 2015, in 2022, our Agency received a KDOT AIC Grant for Clean Technology Expansion (Electric vehicle and charging stations), purchased additional fleet vehicles, and are waiting for an additional nine wheelchair accessible vans.

Northeast Kansas Area Agency on Aging has leased space for 50 years, and the current building is on the market. The building lacks space to meet our current operational needs and growing transportation program. Under these circumstances and market limitations, the NEKAAA governing board decided that new construction is the best solution to safeguard public and private funding resources.

We appreciate your consideration of aging services and providing a method for them to age in place and remain connected to their community. For reason stated above, I ask for your favorable vote to pass HB 2416 out of Committee for a full vote on the House floor; and support thereafter.

Thank you,
Karen Wilson
Executive Director