



**House Committee on General Government Budget
Written Testimony in Opposition of House Bill 2785
Presented by Kristi Brown, Sr. Director of Government Affairs**

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

Chairman Sutton and members of the committee, my name is Kristi Brown, Senior Director of Government Affairs for the Kansas Chamber of Commerce. The Kansas Chamber appreciates the opportunity to offer written testimony in opposition to House Bill 2785.

The bill's stated purpose is to lessen the penalty for, and exclusion from receiving unemployment benefits from the State when an individual knowingly misrepresents material facts regarding their eligibility. The Kansas Chamber's core focus is to represent the business community regarding legislative actions impacting them. Our concern is allowing those that have defrauded the State access to benefits they have inappropriately obtained in the past.

The US Department of Labor estimates that between 2013 and 2016, the State of Kansas had an improper unemployment insurance payment rate of above 14%. A myriad of factors contributed to this percentage including fraud. Allowing those who have intentionally applied for and received unemployment benefits, for which they were not qualified, access to the same program only two years later creates opportunity to misuse the benefit.

Our State currently enjoys the low unemployment rate of 3.4%. This historically low unemployment rate has allowed for a healthy unemployment benefit trust fund balance. This should not mean that the standard by which the State provides support to those who are not currently employed be lowered to allow access to the program to those who have defrauded it in the past.

We thank you for the opportunity to offer comments in opposition to HB2785.