

Testimony before the House Taxation Committee
Supporting Comprehensive Tax Reform

Heather M.F. Ousley
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Mr. Chair, Members of the Committee:

As a life-long Kansan, and as a mother of three, I want to provide my support for comprehensive tax reform. Since the 2012 tax reform package and the additional tax policy changes in 2013, we have watched our state suffer from a lack of ability to make ends meet.

The Kansans hit hardest by budget cuts are our most vulnerable. Young children in need of state assistance in escaping unsafe homes find that the Department of Children and Families is short 463 social workers, due to a lack of funds. School children find themselves in overfull classrooms. Mental Health patients in our state hospitals are unsafe due to overworked and understaffed facilities. Our roads, once reliable and secure, are deteriorating, our infrastructure now a cause of worry. And for what benefit? So that the folks who have the least financial worry, the folks with the most money in the bank, can get to keep a little bit more?

We need you to do at least three things: (1) we need you to reinstate taxes on pass through income; (2) we need you to repeal the ratchet mechanism known as “the glide path to zero”; and (3) we need you to restore our income tax to a three tiered system.

Reinstating the taxes on the LLCs and S-Corps is something most appear willing to consider. But legislators seem unaware that without repealing the ratchet mechanism, any enhanced revenue captured by the tax on the pass through income will simply go to automatically lowering the remaining upper income tax bracket. Our classrooms, our foster care system, our hospital system and our roads would be left with no benefit, while the upper income earners would receive the benefit. Surely you can see that only when the ratchet mechanism repeal is paired with reinstating the LLC tax is there a benefit for the people of Kansas.

But more importantly than all of this, is the restoration of the upper income tax bracket. The collapse of our three brackets to two brackets has done nothing to spur economic growth or additional jobs – in fact, Kansas is losing jobs. It simply makes no sense for the wealthiest Kansans to keep so much more, and to get away with so little responsibility, while vulnerable Kansans needs are not met. We have a moral responsibility to make sure the needs of our communities are met. Ignoring this responsibility, out of fear of a postcard, is simply un-Kansan.

Sincerely,

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