



United Community Services of Johnson County

Date: January 31, 2022

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Julie K. Brewer, Executive Director
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Chairman McGinn and Members of the Committee on Local Government:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify **in opposition to Senate Bill 316**. United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) is a nonprofit agency that provides data analysis, leads collaborative planning, and mobilizes resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services in Johnson County and the surrounding area. UCS is also tasked with directing the Continuum of Care on Homelessness in Johnson County.

SB 316 creates an additional barrier to housing for vulnerable Kansans, individuals with disabilities, exacerbating the affordable housing crisis in Kansas, and creating a discriminatory effect that violates the Fair Housing Act, 42 U.S.C §§ 3601 et seq.

There is an inadequate supply of affordable housing in Kansas, as reported by the statewide housing study released this year by the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation. Across the state of Kansas over 42% of all renters are cost burdened by their housing, paying more than 30% of their income on housing. Group homes for vulnerable Kansans, such as individuals with disabilities, are a critical source of housing, providing individuals an affordable, supportive, and structured avenue to live full lives.

The state of Kansas and the federal government have taken steps to ensure that group homes are protected and that individuals with disabilities as defined by the Fair Housing Act can live in group homes in residential neighborhoods of their choice throughout the United States. The Fair Housing Act (FHA), 42 U.S.C §§ 3601 et seq., provides individuals with disabilities an equal right to live in single family neighborhoods. It prohibits discrimination, including through zoning or other regulations, and mandates reasonable accommodations be made so that these residents can have equal access to neighborhoods of their choice. The FHA further provides that state or jurisdictional law resulting in discriminatory housing practices are invalid (42 U.S.C. §3615).

SB 316 would allow jurisdictions to begin regulating, through zoning and other local ordinances, the location of group homes by creating a minimum distance requirement between group homes. This creates an additional barrier to housing for vulnerable individuals. Many group homes are rented and provide stable financial support to the local economy. Going through a state-led review process for location or relocation of a group home will result in delays that effect the ability of these individuals to secure rental agreements or purchase homes. The effect of a minimum distance requirement will fall entirely on group homes for individuals with disabilities, a discriminatory effect that violates the FHA.

UCS advocates to support safe, stable, attainable housing and as such does not support statutes that act as barriers to attainable housing. SB 316 presents a barrier to safe, stable, attainable housing for vulnerable Kansans.

