



To: Chairwoman Caryn Tyson and Members of the Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation
From: David Jordan, President and CEO, United Methodist Health Ministry Fund
Date: January 31, 2024
RE: SB 377

Chairwoman Tyson and Members of the Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on SB 377. We support this bipartisan bill, which will save Kansans more than \$1 billion over three years.

The United Methodist Health Ministry Fund (Health Fund) is a 37-year-old, \$60-million health philanthropy located in Hutchinson. Our mission is to improve the health of all Kansans. We focus on three strategic areas—access to care, early childhood development, and Healthy Congregations, a program aimed at addressing community health by engaging churches throughout Kansas. **Sustainable fiscal policy is a top priority and this bill is smart and sustainable policy.**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, over the last 12 months [national inflation has risen 3.4%](#). Kansans need relief now. SB 377 will cut unnecessary costs for Kansans across the state and will produce tangible benefits without diverting resources from other state services or agencies. Under this proposal, seniors receiving Social Security will no longer be taxed on this income and Kansans will pay less property and personal taxes, allowing them to participate more in their local economies and keep more dollars in their pocket.

Passage of SB 377 will greatly shorten the wait for the end of sales tax on groceries and usher in this already-approved policy by April 1, 2024 instead of 2025. This bill will also eliminate sales tax on diapers and feminine hygiene products immediately. This means low-income families who are disproportionately affected by the presence of food tax and other taxes on consumable items would benefit sooner and would result in an [average savings of nearly \\$500 for a family of four](#) this year.

Ensuring Kansas families are safe and have food and economic security is foundational for healthy development. Access to food, whether because of affordability or location, is a struggle for many Kansas families. From our state's [pregnancy and risk assessment report](#), we know that 31.2% of babies are born to Kansas families with annual incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level, and 22.5% of Kansas women reported having unmet basic needs during pregnancy. [Feeding America](#) reports that food insecurity in Kansas rose during 2020, and one in seven Kansas children faces food insecurity, meaning they do not know where their next meal will come from. Eliminating the food sales tax on groceries sooner will help families address the challenges related to food insecurity by making groceries more affordable for them.

SB 377 will establish a back-to-school sales tax holiday so more working families can ensure their children have the resources they need to be successful in the classroom. Efforts to establish a back-to-school tax holiday have received bipartisan support in the past.

The Health Fund is committed to fighting for families by supporting measures to increase quality, affordable, and available child care. SB 377 will double the Child and Dependent Care Tax credit to provide relief for working families in need of child care, a resource that can help stabilize vulnerable Kansans.

We hope policymakers from both sides of the aisle will support this initiative that will put extra money in Kansans' pockets without diverting resources from other state services or agencies. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide public comment on SB 377. Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can be of assistance.