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House Tax Committee changes don't make Senate Bill 22 easier to swallow

Topeka, KS -- The House Taxation Committee's decision to pass Senate Bill 22 along to the full House this afternoon was a disappointment. The additions of a food sales tax reduction and a mechanism to collect online sales tax do not improve the bill, instead making it even more costly and serving as a distraction from the real issue at hand.

The issue is this: After years of self-inflicted wounds from misguided fiscal policy, Kansas should not be trying to repeat the mistakes of former Gov. Sam Brownback.

"We can't afford SB 22," said Emily Fetsch, director of policy and research at the Kansas Center for Economic Growth project. "It would send Kansas backward, rather than making the investments we need to repair our state."

In passing Senate Bill 30 in the 2017, a bipartisan majority understood that starving the state of revenue with upside-down tax policy was a losing strategy. After the bill passed, we saw revenues rebound, and the state start down a road to recovery. That challenges remain should be obvious by the tasks faced by the new governor and her administration: funding education, fixing state agencies, and repairing infrastructure.

That's why SB 22 -- which already cost hundreds of millions of dollars over three years before being amended this afternoon -- is so misguided. With federal base-broadening measures meaning increased revenue for Kansas, this is an idea opportunity to make much-needed fixes.

We urge the full House to turn aside SB 22 and instead pursue targeted policies that lift up lower- and middle-income Kansans. The sales tax on food and online sales tax collections are indeed worthy of discussion, but on their own merits and not added on to a bad bill.

The Legislature can do better than SB 22.

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