



THE URBAN COUNCIL of KANSAS CITY

For Immediate Release | March 31, 2025 | Contact Dr. Vernon Howard 816.547.0719

Urban Council Urges NO Vote on Question 1- Public Safety “Jail” Tax

Kansas City, MO – The Urban Council of Kansas City, a collective of five Civil rights organizations, announces our staunch opposition to the proposed Public Safety Sales Tax “Jail Tax” which will appear on the April 8, 2025, ballot in Kansas City, MO. The Urban Council is comprised of the NAACP (MO), National Black United Front-KC, Southern Christian Leadership Conference-GKC, Urban League of Greater Kansas City, and the Urban Summit of KCMO.

We cannot in good conscience support what is essentially a “Jail Tax” that shifts \$250 million away from vital services such as first responders and 911 operators while investing \$0 on infrastructure to facilitate the delivery of services focused on the root causes of crime. This measure is badly planned, fiscally irresponsible, unsustainable, unjust to the poor and abandons the people and sectors of Kansas City who need the investment the most to really prevent crime and improve public safety.

Shifts Money from First Responders and Emergency Services: The proposal takes away \$250 million previously dedicated in the prior tax to emergency services such as fire, ambulance, and 911 operators in a time when support for such should be prioritized.

Prioritizes and Adopts Failed Mass Incarceration Policies: The model of crime prevention, a model that is unsustainable and has proven ineffective in curbing crime for decades. Those who have reviewed the data and who work in the field on this issue know that incarceration is not the best and most effective method to create public safety. The proposal is woefully unintelligent. Common sense tells us that incarceration locks up the person but does not prevent the crime. Meanwhile this proposal, which really should be called the “Jail Tax” excludes and rejects funding the necessary investments proven to stamp out root causes of crime such as the need for rehabilitation centers, mental health facilities and other investments dedicated to re-entry, re-education, houselessness, job training, job placement, and other anti-poverty initiatives which are sorely lacking in Kansas City.

Represents Bad Fiscal Management and Poor Planning: The proposal would construct a \$250 million dollar facility jailing 250 persons at a rate of \$1 million dollars per bed and will cost a total of \$800 million dollars to maintain and operate over its forty-year life with the City of KCMO presenting no plan on how the operation of the jail will be funded, a cost the tax itself does not cover.

Disproportionately Taxes and Burdens the Poor and Is Therefore Structurally Unjust: Due to its flat level regressive nature, those who make the least would be negatively impacted the most and will be forced to contribute more of a share of their already strained income causing the kind of desperation and despair that many of us who work in the field on this issue know from direct encounters with individuals often leads to and sets the circumstances for criminal activity. As Dr. Eddie Glaude commented at the Urban League of Greater Kansas City’s Difference Maker Luncheon on this issue, speaking anecdotally, “If I’m hungry, you’re not safe.”

Lacks Transparency, Sufficient Details, and is Fraught with Misinformation and Deception: Some proponents of this measure are being disingenuous, and others are being less than fully transparent with the public about the details of this measure as has been the protocol of key municipal leaders, a fact we know well. Some of the information being disseminated to voters is so far from the truth that it reflects disinformation and propaganda, not responsible truth-telling that gives voters the information they deserve.

Attorney Rod Chapel Esq., NAACP

Mr. Mickey Dean, NBUF-KC

Ms. Gwen Grant, Urban League of Greater Kansas City

The Reverend Dr. Vernon Percy Howard, Jr. SCLC-GKC

The Honorable Bishop and International Prelate James D. Tindall, Sr., Urban Summit of KC