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Honorable Members of the City Council and Esteemed Colleagues,

I, Kayla Vernon, am reaching out to you today *not* merely as a 33-year-old mother and assistant manager at a distinguished local electrician company here in Kansas City, but as a testament to the resilience and steadfast determination in the face of adversity. My journey epitomizes the delicate balance between ambition and the daunting specter of poverty. I straddle the line between poverty and success dependent upon which bill is due that Friday.

Despite earning a respectable income of sixty thousand dollars per year, and income a younger me could have never imagined earning, the dream of homeownership remains elusive. Each passing day, as I diligently dispatch invoices and work with builders, I witness the creation of beautiful homes, and the magic of growth in this city. But I am also painfully reminded that these are dwellings I can only envision inhabiting in my dreams. The craftsmen and builders around me, whom I deeply respect, know me primarily as the really nice office lady, yet I aspire for them to see me as more—a future homeowner contributing to our community's fabric. The impact this has had on my colleagues and the wonderful builders in this city is an entire different speech, but today you will hear from **me**, today I am not speaking as someone in the industry, but as a local citizen trying to make ends meet like so many others.

While I commend the noble intentions underlying the proposed code and its potential benefits, I must draw attention to its harsh implications for individuals like me. Should this code lead to a projected 20% surge in housing prices from the inception of electrical installations and wiring—a realistic outcome—I fear that the prospect of

owning a home will only recede further into the distance. The current challenges are substantial; rent stands at \$1200 with fluctuating utility costs that often strain my budget. Essential expenses such as milk, coffee, and school supplies continue to rise, yet they are non-negotiable expenditures. Failure to meet utility payments jeopardizes my very home, subjecting me to the immediate threat of eviction. So, a savings stretched out over several years that only equals two to three months of rent, does not appeal to me whatsoever, regardless of what that Ameren bill says, it *will* be paid.

My advocacy today extends beyond personal aspirations; it resonates with countless others in our city grappling with similar hardships. We yearn for homes where the freedom to paint walls without constraint signifies stability and promises a future foundation for our families.

I implore you, esteemed council members, to consider an alternative approach that empowers individuals like myself to realize the dream of stable homeownership—a dream that transcends mere utility savings. What value do these savings hold if we are forever denied the opportunity to live in a place we can proudly call our own?

Today, I urge you to amplify the voices of those striving against financial adversity, to heed our call for pathways that foster true housing stability and community prosperity. Let us collectively pave the way for a future where every hardworking individual in Kansas City can aspire to own a home and contribute meaningfully to our shared community.

Thank you for your attention and for considering the heartfelt perspectives of myself and so many others who yearn for a chance at homeownership in our beloved Kansas City.

Respectfully submitted,

Kayla M. Vernon



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