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HB 2003

To the Chairman and the Members of the Local Government Committee,

I am here today to speak for my support of House Bill 2003 involving Island Annexation. First, I would like to give you a short background on me, as it will help reveal why I am passionate about our state government and the policies and procedures that make it work.

My grandfather (Fred Weaver) and my grandmother (Pat Weaver) both served in our State House of Representatives. My grandfather for 13 plus years and my grandmother for 3 more. My grandfather then served as the Chairman of the State Board of Tax Appeals. I spent some time in Topeka at a young age and learned how our government worked. I am obviously biased, but I feel 100% positive that both of my grandparents served our government for the right reasons. Those reasons were to make sure things were being done for the RIGHT reasons, and to ensure EVERYONE was represented equally. Today, I call on you to use those same reasons as you consider House Bill 2003.

Island Annexation as it exists today takes representation away from the very people that it effects. Our Federal, State, and Local governments were set up to protect and ensure the rights of our citizens and allow them to have representation. With our current Island Annexation statutes, this is not happening. The local residents of Kansas can lose land in their community and have absolutely no input on what happens with that land. This creates a loss of agriculture, loss of tax money, possibility of pollution, decreasing property values, decline in school enrollment, and many other problems. City officials making decisions on how to zone annexed land DO NOT represent the residents of the outlying area. For these residents to have a voice, there must be involvement of the area county commissioners. The statutes as they read now do not require this and actually help create these problems, instead of protecting against them. For an Island Annexation to be executed fairly, it needs to be a win for the city, a win for the residents, and a win for county. It's only a win for the annexing side at this point in time. This is not just wrong for moral reasons, it goes against the premise's on which the government of our nation was founded.

As an educator in an unincorporated community, I worry about the effects of island annexation as it relates to our schools and population. Communities like ours were built by people "staying around home" and raising their families. We wanted our kids to grow up with the same values in their community that we had. We are proud of the life we have made here! The possibility of another city being able to just "take what they want" and "do whatever they choose with it" scares me to death. Who would want to live in a place where we don't even get

a voice in what happens to land in OUR community? If steps are not taken to give the small rural communities a voice and keep them safe from neighboring cities, we will most definitely see the death of small town Kansas. Kansas started in 1861 with the promise of a new life in a new place for people who needed a fresh start. Those early settlers who came during our beginning years waded through the Civil War, the treasury of the state not having any money, not having a state militia, drought, depression, and many other hardships. They did this for the opportunity to get their own land and make a life of their own. Kansas was started by small communities all throughout the state. We have become the Kansas we are today because of these “small town” people. That is simply who we are and who we should continue to be.

I simply ask that you do what is right and protect the small communities of Kansas. They have been here since our beginning and can continue to be a great asset to our future. All citizens in Kansas deserve the simple right to have a voice in their community. Please consider the changes proposed by House Bill 2003 and give us all a chance to make decisions for our future.