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Good morning. Thank you for allowing me to share with you today. My name is Judith Cremer, and I write as the Director of the Pottawatomie Wabaunsee Regional Library, one of the named entities in House Bill No. 2719.

Pottawatomie Wabaunsee Regional Library is the only two county Library in Kansas, with library branches in Alma, Eskridge, Onaga, St. Marys, Alta Vista, Harveyville, Olsburg, and Westmoreland. The reason I am contacting you today is because of HB2719. This bill seems to have come out of nowhere and is now causing a great deal of anxiety in the library world. HB2719 has been referred to the committee on taxation and appears to be set for a hearing on Monday, March 14th, at 3:30 p.m. HB2719 could have major consequences for libraries, and for Pottawatomie Wabaunsee Regional Library in particular, so I felt it necessary to bring it to your attention.

Pottawatomie Wabaunsee Regional Library is established under K.S.A. 12-1231 and supported by a mill levy on Pottawatomie and Wabaunsee Counties, excluding Wamego and the part of Manhattan in Pottawatomie County, based on population and valuation in each county per K.S.A. 12-1234(b). Our library board is composed of six members, three members appointed by each county commission, plus an ex-officio member from each county commission. Currently it is the library board's responsibility to annually determine the cost of maintaining the regional library and presenting a budget to the Pottawatomie and Wabaunsee county commissions. The Library Board takes this responsibility very seriously and struggles greatly to balance fiscal responsibility against rising expenses and the very real needs of the public we serve. The ex-officio members of the Board that serve as County commissioners in each county are included in this process and their input and feedback is fully considered in the budget that is approved by the Library Board.

HB2719 effectively negates the Library Board's previous responsibility to set an annual budget and by changing a single word in the statute transforms the critical funding request for the library's budget from a levy responsibility for the counties into an option up for negotiation. This would put the library in an extremely precarious position, one that could have far reaching negative consequence and I would ask that you please consider that in your discussion of this bill.

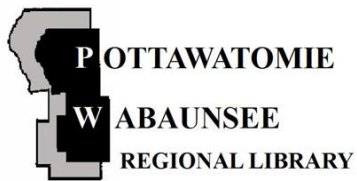
Beyond our situation... HB2791 will have a major impact on all libraries, and seems to particularly target the Regional Library Systems. Pottawatomie Wabaunsee Regional Library pays a contractual fee for membership in the North Central Kansas Library System... one of the seven regional library systems in Kansas. NCKL provides PWRL with essential services including a rotating book collection, technology consulting, group purchasing that provides discounts on books and other library materials, discounted online ordering through the Baker & Taylor book vendors, assistance with cataloging, interlibrary loan and statewide resource sharing, and support for the annual summer reading program. NCKLS staff members serve as important partners in our library's ability to provide the best possible service to the citizen's we serve in Pottawatomie and Wabaunsee Counties.

According to Carol Barta, NCKLS Assistant Director, changes introduced by HB2791 could potentially eliminate around 44% of NCKL's budget. This would put all system services at risk and serve to further destabilize the library world as we know it...

Please take all this into account in the discussion on HB2719. Let me know if there is anything further I can tell you about this bill and the potential impact it could have on our library.

I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Judith Cremer, Director
Pottawatomie Wabaunsee Regional Library
E-mail: pwrlldr@gmail.com



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