



Testimony on HB 2719 – removing authority from library boards and regional library systems

Chairman Kleeb, Vice-Chairman Suellentrop and Members of the Committee:
The City of Wichita submits testimony today in opposition to House Bill 2719.

As one of the largest public libraries in Kansas, the Wichita Public Library serves not only the residents of our city but also several thousand individuals from smaller communities and unincorporated areas of our region. On average, 15% of the materials checked out from Wichita library collections are borrowed by people who live outside our city limits. In addition, Wichita's library lends several hundred items each month to libraries in all parts of Kansas so that these materials can be shared with customers in those smaller communities.

Wichita's library can extend its services in these ways because of the support it receives from the South Central Kansas Library System (SCKLS). In 2015, the Wichita Public Library received approximately \$300,000 in grant funding to offset the costs of serving customers from outside our local taxing district. System grants enable our library to add to the scope and depth of the materials collections. This benefits Wichita residents while also providing inventory to support library use from customers living outside our city. Funds also enable us to grow our online collections, making e-books and subscription databases available to our library customers on a 24/7 basis and to support a courier contract which keeps the lending of materials to smaller libraries affordable. Without the support and funding assistance of the SCKLS, the ability of Wichita's library to continue to extend service to individuals beyond the local taxing district will be significantly compromised.

Only 35 of the public libraries in Kansas serve communities of more than 10,000 persons. A first review of changes proposed in HB2719 suggests that as many as 106 of the state's 329 public libraries will be at risk of closure if this bill becomes law. At the same time, and as previously noted, this bill leaves libraries less able to serve Kansans living outside their local taxing districts.

In this knowledge age, access to reliable information has never been important. There is no better place to get this information than from a library. All Kansans deserve that opportunity, whether they live in a metropolitan area like Wichita or in one of the most remote rural parts of our state. Regional library systems ensure this equitable access. It is for these reasons that we encourage you to oppose this measure.