



**Office of the County Counselor**

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Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee

Re: SB 373

Honorable Chair Thompson and members of the Committee:

Shawnee County thanks you for this opportunity to provide opposition testimony to Senate Bill 373, which would prohibit the use of public funds for lobbying purposes.

The issues that the Kansas Legislature is addressing this session—taxation, public safety, education funding and election security, among others—are not uniquely state-level issues. They're also local issues. County leaders can provide valuable local perspective on these vital topics that legislators need in order to make sound decisions. While the legislature is in session, county leaders remain close to the people and can help carry their concerns to Topeka. However, in order to do so efficiently and effectively, counties need to have a clear voice that can be heard each and every day the legislature is in session. The restrictions imposed by SB 373 would dampen that voice, and therefore the voice of the people.

Any concern that current practice hinders transparency is without merit. Current Kansas law already provides for transparency. Every person registered as a lobbyist is required to file a detailed report listing the amount of public funds paid to hire or contract for the lobbying services on behalf of a governmental entity or any association of governmental entities that receive public funds. By law, these reports must be made available on a searchable public website maintained by the Kansas Secretary of State. (K.S.A. § 46-295) The Kansas Legislature should trust voters to decide whether county leaders are wasting money in this regard.

In fact, SB 373 harms transparency. If enacted, county leaders would lose the ability to meaningfully participate in the statewide discussions that keenly affect counties and the people they represent. If enacted into law, SB 373 would force local officials to divide their attention between working on local solutions while struggling to keep up to date with the daily happenings at the legislature. Lobbyists can help bridge this gap by quickly and effectively relaying the interests of counties and the citizens they represent to legislators.

Shawnee County respectfully asks the committee not to advance this legislation. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard V. Eckert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Richard V. Eckert  
Shawnee County Counselor