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Written Testimony from City of Wichita Supporting HB2038

The Film Tax Credit Bill

Submitted by Wichita Mayor Lily Wu, Council Members Brandon Johnson, Becky Tuttle, Maggie Ballard, Mike Hoheisel

We are writing to express strong support for HB 2038, the Film Tax Credit Bill, currently being considered by the Senate Commerce and House Tax committees. We believe this legislation can provide the opportunity for Kansas to compete in the national film production industry. The incentives to private film producers would provide a significant positive impact on the economies of several Kansas towns and cities, including Wichita. The film and digital media production industry can provide several benefits to local economies, including job creation, tourism, and increased tax revenue. As Kansas cannot compete with several other states that incentivize this type of production, this legislation is necessary for Kansas to receive the same returned economic benefits many other states enjoy when supporting their creative industries.

Compared to our neighboring states, Kansas is well behind the curve in benefiting from the economic impact of the film industry. As many film makers are priced out of the historically prominent film markets like California and Georgia, Kansas has a unique opportunity to both attract and retain the film industry from these other markets through competitive rebate and incentive programs. Currently, competitive tax credits for film productions are offered by neighboring states: Oklahoma, Nebraska, Colorado, Arkansas, New Mexico, and Texas.

The City of Wichita owns and operates Old Cowtown Museum which is a sought-after filming destination for historical/western filming. This genre has had a resurgence in recent years after the success of shows like *Yellowstone*, *1883*, and *The Madison*. Budgets for these shows range between from \$7 to \$22 million dollars per production and it is reported that Paramount Global spent more than \$500 million annually on western shows created by producer Taylor Sheridan. These productions are currently benefiting from Montana's Media Tax Credit, and the State and local economies have seen significant economic surges because of these projects. As Kansas does not offer film incentives, Old Cowtown Museum leadership says they have lost out on prospective film productions that have expressed interest in filming but have walked away because there are no incentives and no film office to support the production.

We have heard from several Kansans who understand the need for this legislation.

Shawn Rhodes, Director of Digital Services at Underground Vaults and Storage (UVS) in Hutchinson, shared that UVS has a vested interest in supporting the bill to encourage the filmmaking infrastructure here in Kansas. Mr. Rhodes is also an independent filmmaker. He wrote in a statement, “As a long-time independent filmmaker, I am personally invested in making this happen for the community of filmmakers and businesses in Wichita and the state of Kansas. It will be a winning situation for everyone involved.”

Melanie Addington, former Executive Director of Tallgrass Film Association and member of the Grow Kansas Film Advisory Committee shared her support for the Film Tax Credit Bill, saying, “Having film incentives puts Kansas on the playing field to bring in films and keep local crews working, paying taxes and living here, rather than having to move away. It is an economic driver for states that approve it and can also help with new graduates staying in their community.”

Local Creative Producer, Lela Meadow-Conner, pointed out, “Many other states offer competitive rates for filmmakers, and thus have launched thriving creative communities with economic perks.”

We urge the support of HB 2038 to help the state of Kansas receive the economic benefit of the film production industry.