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Testimony in Support of SB 227
House Taxation Committee

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Turner, Ranking Member Sawyer, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 227. My name is Blade Mages, and I serve as the Executive Director of Wareham Hall, a nonprofit organization leading the renovation of the historic Wareham Theater to create a state-of-the-art performance space in Manhattan, Kansas.

Since 1880, a structure has stood at 410 Poyntz in downtown Manhattan for the same purpose—bringing the community together through the arts and entertainment. Today, we are actively raising funds for a major renovation of this historic property. While we have secured significant philanthropic support, rising construction costs and economic uncertainty mean we still have substantial funds to raise. Meanwhile, the building sits idle, deteriorating instead of serving its community.

Like many historic properties across the state, our ability to preserve and restore this space relies on the effectiveness of the Kansas Historic Tax Credit (HTC) program. SB 227 strengthens this program, encouraging private investment in historic preservation, supporting economic growth, and expanding the tax base.

Why SB 227 Matters

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- **The Historic Tax Credit program has long proven its ability to spur private investment, create jobs, and revitalize historic properties.**
- **Interest rates, supply chain disruptions, material costs, and broader market volatility have made preservation increasingly difficult.** Expanding the HTC ensures that necessary upgrades—such as fire safety, accessibility, and structural improvements—remain financially viable.
- Many of the most **critical upgrades to keep historic buildings safe and functional are among the most expensive.** Increased HTC support makes these projects more achievable, ensuring these structures remain assets to their communities.
- **Historic rehabilitation strengthens local economies,** increasing property values and tax revenues while supporting skilled labor and local businesses.

- **These historic buildings are a defining part of what makes Kansas unique.** They are the heart of our communities, shaping local identity and preserving the character that makes each town special.

A Smart Investment in Kansas' Future

SB 227 enhances an existing, effective tool without adding new spending. It provides critical support for projects that have already maximized their philanthropic and local fundraising efforts. It encourages private sector-driven revitalization while ensuring that historic assets remain safe, functional, and economically viable.

When completed, our project will bring 40,000 to 50,000 patrons to our downtown annually, supporting our vibrant district and solidifying Manhattan as a destination for artists, performers, and patrons alike. We are just one of many transformative projects. Across Kansas, businesses, nonprofits, and property owners are not just working to restore historic buildings—they are revitalizing their communities and shaping their futures. Without the passage of SB 227, projects like ours—and countless others—may not be possible, leaving historic buildings underutilized and local economies without key catalysts for growth.

At a time when Kansas needs to remain focused on attracting new employers, retaining and growing businesses, and keeping students, young professionals, retirees, and soldiers in-state, investments in our communities and unique historic districts are a key strategy to make Kansas more competitive and vibrant. SB 227 makes historic preservation and renovation efforts more feasible, leading to long-term benefits for communities statewide.

I appreciate your consideration and urge your support for SB 227.

Sincerely,

Blade Mages
Executive Director
Wareham Hall