

Senate Commerce Committee
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 52

Thank you, Mr Chairman and members of the committee.

My name is Kristen Bush—although most people call me by nickname, ‘Kiki’—and two years ago, I had the honor of speaking here in favor of film tax incentives.

As a brief recap, I’m a professional actor who’s been in over fifty films, tv shows, & plays—including on HBO, NBC, and at the Lincoln Center; I’ve been directed by Oscar and Tony winners; I’ve acted with many household names; and Meryl Streep has praised my acting twice...to my face.

During the pandemic, I moved back to rural Kansas...and stayed.

Today, I’m going to give you the world’s shortest crash course in independent film production...just in case you’ve never made a movie yourself.

Here are the basics: You’ll need to raise a lot of money. You’ll need actors, crew, equipment, locations, and you’ll need local businesses to help feed, house, and transport your cast and crew.

Easy, right?

Not quite. But...this is precisely what I did: I raised tens of thousands of dollars, largely made up of small donations from rural Kansas women. I cast professional actors from Kansas who now live in New York. I hired a largely Arkansas-based crew. We shot on location at my family’s horse ranch in rural Saline county. And I spent thousands of dollars on local hotels, airbnbs, caterers, restaurants, grocery stores, and diners.

Now, I may not be Martin Scorsese, but our film's modest budget went straight back into the Saline County economy.

Mercifully, the Kansas weather cooperated during our filming, and I now have a final cut of THE GAME CAMERA, which we showed in the Capitol Auditorium last week on Kansas Day.

Now, some might say: 'Well, look, she made a movie *without* incentives.'

And, you're right: I did.

Past tense.

But I can't afford to make a future one without them.

Some others might say: 'We don't need Hollywood here, they'll just go back to LA once filming is done.'

Well, last century, they didn't even bother coming, as 3 dozen cowboy movies set in Kansas were shot in greater Los Angeles.

But, in recent years, the film industry has been de-centralizing *out* of LA—and those fires last month will push more filmmakers out of California. With this exodus, it bears remembering that tax incentives are—by a long shot—the number one reason for choosing film locations.

Remember how I said I hired a largely *Arkansas*-based crew?

Although central Kansas students are getting expert film training at Wichita State's Shocker Studios, we don't yet have access to enough professional crew members there...so I was forced to import them.

However, one of my hardest-working crew members was a young man named Isaiah Marcotte from Salina. He's a filmmaker in his own right and

is grappling with the decision to stay in Kansas...or to follow the work to other states.

He told me: *"It's just so hard to stay here and make a living in my craft...it would be easier to leave, but this is my home."*

I identify with this completely. Professionally, it would behoove me to move back to New York City...or to Atlanta...or Oklahoma...or even to the Missouri side of Kansas City...which, due to its tax incentives, scored big with the Hallmark movie "A Chief's Love Story" which spent 1.5 million dollars in KCMO—that's one movie alone.

Kansas does not make it easy for its creative young people to stay here. And this isn't just about film—the arts are one of the major indicators of healthy communities in general. As a state, we're unwilling to staunch the creative brain drain by actively telling our kids that it's better for them to move away.

Without incentives, they probably will.

This is my home that I love. And I believe our landscapes and our people's stories are worthy enough to compete with other states; that our stories are worthy enough to film.

We need your help...to tell our own stories...at home in Kansas.

Thank you.