

GREAT STATE OF KANSAS
FILM & MEDIA TAX INCENTIVE - TESTIMONY

January 31, 2025

Members of the Committee,

My name is Justin Begnaud, and I am a Kansas resident. I am also a film and television, and digital media producer.

What does a producer do?

As a producer, I help find projects and adapt books, articles and other stories into feature film or television screenplays. I help bring these projects to life. I also hire the actors, and hire the crew such as the Director, the Camera person, lighting crew, set-building crew, costume designers, hair/ makeup artists, wardrobe, grips, gaffers and anyone else onset. I also hire the editor, colorist, sound designer, motion graphic artists, animators, sound mixers, and visual effects professionals. And I hire vendors for food, beverage, catering, truck rentals, car rentals, heavy equipment like cherry pickers, cranes, fork lifts, and other construction workers. And I help book hotels, make travel arrangements, and plan events.

A producer is also instrumental in finding the location to make the movie or television series. This can be a warehouse, sound stage, a home, a small business like a coffee shop, or a flower shop. This can be an exterior location like the Flint Hills, or Dodge City, or St Mary's, or Division Ranch, or Cottonwood Falls, or the western prairies.

Another instrumental component of the producer is to find the money. This can be in the form of private investors, grants, gifts-in-kind, bank loans against distribution contracts, and... tax incentives. These last two are key to what a producer does. 1) Finding the location, and 2) finding the money. Many times they are one in the same.

Finding a location with a tax incentive is a win-win for the producer. Kansas has not had a significant tax incentive in over 10 years, and because of this, our beautiful state, with gorgeous locations, and hardworking crews have simply been overlooked. A fly-over.

I was born and raised in Kansas City, and when I graduated from high school and wanted to pursue a college degree and a career in film and television, I had to leave this region. There was nothing here for me. I attended college at Syracuse University in New York which has one of the best communications schools for film, radio and television broadcast. I moved to New York City, not back home to Kansas because NBC, The History Channel, MTV Networks, and the Tribeca Film Institute, all of which are places I worked in my young career were all located in New York. Not Kansas.

I later moved to Los Angeles, and worked for Universal Pictures, and produced films for Netflix, MGM, Fox Searchlight. And I worked for completion bond company, Film Finances, and later a film tax credit lender. I have worked on dozens of television series, and worked on over 400 feature films.

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I have made movies in over 30 different states here in the US, and close to 20 different countries around the world. But never in Kansas.

Why?

Zero. Tax. Incentives. I am now a proud Kansas resident. And I now know we have a growing crew base, we have the top-quality vendors and service industry providers, but sadly not the one tool I know from experience will work. Kansas has never been part of those conversation. And I am here today to help change that. There has never been a better time to provide an incentive to film in Kansas.

Thank You,

Justin Begnaud

Kansas Resident

Film & TV Producer