

Chairman Brunk, Vice Chair Couture-Lovelady and Committee Members,

Thank you for considering passage of H.B. 2291. I am a licensed bingo premise owner from Hutchinson, KS. I also have real estate holdings in Hutchinson. I opened a premise in 1984. I did so because there were nonprofit organizations in my city that could not hold a bingo fundraiser because they did not own a building. In fact, most nonprofits do not own a building or a meeting hall except for your VFW's and American Legions. I offered nonprofits in my city a large facility that was furnished with bingo equipment, tables, and chairs, while I operated a concessions stand and sold items like hot dogs, hamburgers, popcorn and drinks.

I soon found out that I could not make ends meet on a 3 day a week operation, so I took my concessions business to the Kansas State Fair. From there, I have grown a Kansas business that sells concessions at State Fairs across the United States.

Kansas' laws as they relate to fund raising are outdated and overly restrictive. Every state around Kansas allows much higher prize payouts and does not restrict the days of operation. Yet, we reside in the only state in the nation that owns its own casinos that compete against charitable fundraising 24 hours a day. The overly restrictive laws have put many bingo operations out of business, including American Legions and VFW halls, and have stymied fund raising in Kansas. We have lost over half of our Kansas bingo licensees in the past ten years. If you don't pass this bill, we will continue to loose licensees and the charitable causes they support.

I ask that you pass H.B. 2291 and keep all charitable fundraising in one bill. We do not trust the legislature to fix bingo fundraising unless it is attached to a bill enacting raffles. More important, nonprofits across Kansas have worked with the Department of Revenue and agreed to the concepts outlined in H.B. 2291. We know the finer details of regulation will be reviewed again by the legislature in your Rules and Regulations committee.

Thank you for your time and for your support for H.B. 2291.

Charles Griffin
Hutchinson, KS