



House Taxation Committee
Room 582-N, the State House
Topeka, Kansas 66612

March 11, 2015

Dear Committee Members,

SUBJECT: HB 2298 - Removing the Sunset for the Rural Opportunity Zones Program

Please consider this as a letter of support for the extension of the Rural Opportunity Zone Program. Republic County opted into the student loan repayment portion of the ROZ program in 2012. In 2014 we had six participants in the student loan repayment program. Republic County Economic Development (RCED) funded three applicants using donations raised from businesses, local foundations, and organizations without county any tax dollars. Three more applicants were funded using the employer sponsorship option. Two applicants were sponsored by Republic County Hospital and one sponsored by USD #426 Pike Valley.

Republic County currently has six approved applicants on our waiting list and we expect more applicants in the near future. I will be recommending to our Republic County Commissioners to consider contributing county tax dollars to sponsor applicants, like many of the other participating ROZ counties.

This program has been beneficial in retaining young graduates from our county who are employed by major industries like healthcare and education. Republic County's participation thus far has gained traction from our major employers who are now comfortable leveraging it as a recruitment and retention tool adding three to the program this year.

As a recent college graduate in 2010 who returned to Republic County without the chance to participate in the program I am in full support of ROZ and any future extension of the program. ROZ is a great first step for rural Kansas in supporting the next generation of well-educated leaders while securing an educated workforce in their community. The economic impact of these participants will be a catalyst for investment in local housing, goods, services, and often add children to our schools.

I would like to thank you in advance for your careful consideration. Please contact me by phone 785-374-3047 or email rcedc@nckcn.com if you have questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Luke Mahin", written in a cursive style.

Luke Mahin
Republic County Economic Development Director