



March 19, 2018

House Appropriations Committee
300 SW 10th Street, 112-N
Topeka, KS 66612

Chairman Waymaster and House Appropriations Committee Members,

Please accept this as a letter in strong support of House Bill 2767, a bill reinstating the Enterprise Zone. As the former Executive Director of the Smoky Hill Development Corporation, the economic development arm of Ellsworth County, I have been working on this issue with my colleagues for over six years and testified on numerous occasions in many different committees.

The Enterprise Zones as originally enacted had many different facets, giving economic development directors in rural Kansas a much needed tool to help grow and sustain our economies. However, this tool was stripped in the first year of Governor Brownback's administration. At that time, the Governor touted Rural Opportunity Zones (ROZ) which, unbeknownst to my colleagues and I, removed language ending the Enterprise Zone language from statute.

As you know, every new or expanding business has a three to five year window to grow and become successful. Eliminating barriers such as sales tax on building materials allows them to hire that extra employee who can help their operation reach that window moving them from a possible success story to a success story. Like many other economic development programs throughout the nation, giving up short-term gain in favor of long-term growth and sustainability is beneficial to state and local revenue. Creating jobs in rural Kansas, bringing more families to our area, and allowing the ancillary revenue stream grow as a result is what this bill does.

I have examples, that are unfortunately seven years old at this point, of businesses that used the Enterprise Zone statute and other similar measures to become a viable business in my community and others throughout the state. Assuming Rural Opportunity Zones are creating new jobs and business is political nonsense. Giving us back a true economic development tool, allowing economic development directors to actually do their jobs is critical. Handing out money to government employees moving to your community is not economic development.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I would be happy to answer further questions during the committee hearing. If you have further questions I can be contacted at (785) 531-2479 or robjfillion@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rob Fillion".

Rob Fillion