



COWLEY COLLEGE

Date: February 1, 2017
To: Members of the House Education Committee
From: Jessica Lucas, Cowley College Government Liaison
Re: Support of HB 2164

This past fall, I led the campaign to construct a Cowley College full-service campus in Sumner County. Voters were asked to support a half-cent sales tax increase to fund the campus development. We're here today because the majority of Sumner County residents saw the value in a college campus that would offer manufacturing technology, agricultural studies, information technology, education, public safety, and other career training opportunities in the Wellington area.

The measure passed with 56 percent voter approval and was promptly followed by a donation of 18-acres of land for the campus construction. There's a renewed energy in the community because of this effort and economic development opportunities are springing forward that are only possible because of the College's intent to locate there.

Today we're focused on construction and getting the doors opened for classes in the Fall of 2018, but it was never a sure thing that voters were going to approve the sales tax to build the campus.

As the manager of the campaign, I was peppered with questions on a daily basis for sixty days before the election. We were able to provide satisfactory answers for all of those questions, except for one.

I cringed when people would ask me – "Okay, we're going to invest our sales tax dollars in this campus, but will we have a seat on the board? How do we know Cowley College is going to have our interests in mind if the Board is only from Cowley County?"

I didn't cringe because they were asking for something Cowley College wasn't willing to provide, I cringed because it was the one thing I couldn't satisfactorily answer prior to the vote.

Because of current state law, there is no opportunity for Sumner County residents to have a seat on the board, even though beginning in April, their tax dollars will fund a Cowley College campus in their community. It's a taxpayer without representation scenario.

We were very forthright when the question was asked about representation. The answer was always that the Board of Trustees intended to be inclusive of Sumner County's need and perspectives, but the law didn't allow an elected trustee position from the county.

True to the word of Dr. Rittle and the College Board of Trustees, we do want to ensure that Sumner County residents have an elected voice at the table and that's why we're here today asking for your help.

The bill before you allows for the election of a trustee from Sumner County and assures taxpayers have a representative voice from the taxing area.

We hope you will recognize its merit and pass it favorably out of committee.