

TESTIMONY ON HB 2173

**Julia A. Ward
President/Owner
Wayne R Ward Inc.
Greyhound Management Inc**

**Committee on Federal and State Affairs
February 7, 2017**

Chairman and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you concerning the benefits HB 2173 could have to the State of Kansas, the Greyhound Industry, and yes, my personal Greyhound business.

First, I would like to address how HB 2173 would benefit the state of Kansas. There are no expenses to the State to pass this bill. This bill only gives money to my state and at a time when we so desperately need the income! Others will provide testimony on the welfare of these wonderful animals and why it is not and should not be under question concerning this HB 2173. Please note that SB 66 passed in 2007 allowed tracks to have video lottery terminals (VLT's) and that the race tracks in Kansas did not close due to animal neglect! They closed due to the fact that after close to 20 years the race tracks had to find other ways to grow their business. It seems to me a simple mistake in figuring percentages and confusion of the voters is what, in my opinion closed these tracks.

The greyhound industry is a family friendly business! Greyhounds make wonderful house pets. Once a greyhound has finished its athletic career they are adopted through many different pet organizations in the United States and Canada. Some move on to be prestigious sires and dams.

Greyhounds are athletic, sporting, sight hounds that love to chase. God gave them the ability to run up to 40 miles an hour and we (breeders and trainers) were given the honor of taking care of these wonderful animals. Like any professional athlete, they are well taken care of.

Since the race tracks in Kansas have closed, it has caused a decline in our industry which in turn has had a negative effect on the state's economic development, an increase in unemployment and less agricultural small business owners. The race tracks are how the breeders and farmers in our industry afford to raise their animals. From veterinarians to dog food suppliers, the closure of the race tracks has hurt anyone and everyone involved in our industry.

As for my personal greyhound business, I have had to expand out of state in states that have invested in growing their agribusinesses like Arkansas. Wayne R. Ward, Inc., which is my second-generation greyhound racing operation. We have been in the

greyhound business in Kansas for well over 30 years. Without greyhound racing in Kansas, my businesses income generation is concentrated in states such as Arkansas and West Virginia as these tracks have video lottery terminals (VLT's) and have invested in growing their agribusinesses.

While the majority of my greyhound racing business expansion has been outside of Kansas, due to the lack of greyhound racetracks open in Kansas, all of the training and 90% of the raising of all my greyhounds still takes place on my farms in Abilene, Kansas. I have added employees, vehicles and upgraded facilities to maintain the quality of greyhounds' people associate with Wayne R. Ward Inc.

Greyhound Management Inc. is the farm arm of my greyhound business. It is where all greyhounds I raise, whether in another state or in Kansas, are trained. Abilene is the primary location for this business and is where I contribute well over \$1 million to the economy in forms of vet bills, feed bills, employees, vehicles, etc. on an annual basis.

I would love be able to say that my state supports my business the way I support the state of Kansas by not giving up on the idea that one day I will be able to earn income in my home state from the racing end of my industry which, is the only way this works. I am a strong financial contributor to the economy of my state through my business that also supports my local community, Abilene.

To this end, I would encourage your support on HB 2173 as it helps the state revenue streams to offset budget deficits.

Again, I want to thank you and I appreciate your time allowing me to appear before you today.

Sincerely,

Julia Ward