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RE: HB 2545 OPPONENT ORAL TESTIMONY  
House Federal and State Affairs

Dear Chair Barker and Members of the Committee:

I am writing you today to ask that you **OPPOSE HB 2545**, a bill that would bring back greyhound racing to Kansas.

My name is Sherry L. Chavez and I'm a former 911 Emergency & Police Dispatcher, and resident of Wichita, KS, in Sedgwick County – where one of the three greyhound racing tracks is located.

There are many reasons why greyhound racing is only allowed in six states. It has become a dying industry in large part because constituents, like myself, do not want any part in this cruel "sport." However, deterring animal cruelty doesn't have quite the same impact on government officials and politicians as does revenue potential, otherwise we wouldn't be having this discussion today. Therefore, I will first focus on the alleged profitability in greyhound racing, or lack thereof.

Over the past decade, gambling on dog racing has dropped by 66%. The state of Florida, where 12 of the 19 active racing tracks are located, has been repeatedly suffering significant losses in the realm of \$42M per an 18-month period, with regulatory costs far surpassing revenue. As you all know, the state of Kansas also had its moment with greyhound racing. In 1999, Phil Ruffin, Sr. purchased Camptown Greyhound Park, after it had shuttered its doors only 6 months after it's May 1995 opening, with a loss of \$1.5M (or \$250K per month), and an enormous infrastructure cost of \$2.3M to Kansas taxpayers. Mr. Ruffin reopened Camptown in 2000, only to close its doors once again 74 days later. His excuse? He had only bought the park believing a slot machine bill would pass, and when those slots failed to appear, so did Mr. Ruffin's wallet. Eighteen years ago, Mr. Ruffin already proved to us his greyhound racetracks were no longer viable or profitable businesses for Kansas. But if our own history isn't proof enough, consider the words of the owner of two Florida greyhound racetracks, Mr. Isadore Havenick:

"To have 50 people come to a business that seats thousands, it's like going to a Dolphins game in December. It's an empty building."

Why should we listen to Mr. Havenick? Because his racetracks have been losing \$5M *every* year, and that's just a small glimpse at the type of losses Kansans will experience if greyhound racing is brought back to our state.

However, to speak of a loss for Kansans, I must talk about the *true* loss that comes with greyhound racing – the loss of our **own humanity**. To operate just one racetrack, it requires *between 500 and 1,000 greyhounds* at a time, many of whom will inevitably fall victim to sickness, injury, and/or death. Nationwide in the past decade, there were 11,700 racing greyhounds injured and 1,000 killed. These numbers are shocking. Even more shocking? It is actually much higher, since Florida has only recently required documentation from greyhound racetrack owners and breeders.

Abuse and neglect found in greyhound racing includes dogs that have been: drugged with cocaine to improve their performance; starved; denied veterinary care; kept in inadequate cages; constantly muzzled; and forced to remain in a kennel up to 20 hours per day. Crate and muzzle sores are commonly seen on racing dogs, along with broken teeth, ticks, fleas and internal parasites. Being highly sociable animals, greyhounds also suffer tremendous emotional damage when forced to live in too-small kennels, separated from other dogs.

Though greyhounds have a lifespan of 12 to 14 years, racing dogs are only used between the ages of 18 months and 6 years. Thousands are unceremoniously retired each year, after deemed “too old” to race. They have suffered executions by shooting and live electrocution. Thousands of others are sold to vet clinics, forced to continue life muzzled and inside a cage, while being regularly siphoned of blood from their jugular – all because they were lucky enough to have been born with a universal blood type. Only the fortunate few ever get to know what it’s like to have a home, a toy, a treat, or a friend. And these atrocities will be reenacted here in Kansas if we bring greyhound racing back to our state. Unfortunately, every no-kill shelter and rescue in Kansas and the surrounding states are stretched beyond their means. There is simply nowhere safe for these retired greyhounds to go.

Enacting such cruelty upon thousands of greyhounds, simply to fill our coffers, is **just plain wrong for Kansas**. It’s wrong because it’s inhumane, and it’s wrong because it doesn’t make any financial sense. Dogs are our pets, our best friends, our family members, our *children*. With nearly half of all homes having a dog, be assured they show us Kansans love and companionship every day. How would they – our dogs – see us, if they knew we approved this bill? How would your constituents see *you*, if they knew you approved this bill?

I implore you to **OPPOSE HB 2545**. Please vote NO and do not let greyhound racing return to our great state of Kansas.

Respectfully,

/s/ Sherry Chavez

Wichita, KS

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