



House Committee on Rural Revitalization

Re: HB 2131, Reinstating the Enterprise Zone Program

Dear Members of the Committee:

As representatives of the Kansas entrepreneurial and early-stage investment ecosystem, we would like to indicate our support for HB 2131. We ask that you consider the recommendations in this letter, as we believe that the reinstatement of the enterprise zones program would be beneficial to the statewide entrepreneurial community.

The Enterprise Center in Johnson County is a non-profit organization that has been dedicated to creating jobs and fostering economic growth through entrepreneurship for more than 20 years. We offer co-working space for entrepreneurs, educational programs about growing a business, run an MIT-affiliated mentoring program and administer the Mid-America Angels investment network, which has injected \$26 million of private capital into regional, early-stage businesses.

Today, Kansas entrepreneurs lack the access to sources of venture capital and other investment opportunities, and that absence of a critical resource is slowing down our community's ability to create jobs and further economic growth in our state. According to the U.S. Census, rates of firm formation in Kansas have declined by 28% in the past twenty years, indicating an increasingly unfavorable environment for startup formation in Kansas. As more than 50% of Kansans are employed by small businesses, Kansas is particularly reliant on the establishment and success of small businesses.

Reinstating the enterprise zones program has the potential to support rural entrepreneurship and create new jobs and opportunities outside of metropolitan areas. If properly supported, these rural companies have the potential to grow extremely quickly, creating jobs, tax revenue and wealth in our state.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We hope that the members of the committee heed the positive impact that HB 2131 could have on the state's entrepreneurial community as you consider the reinstatement of this critical incentive structure.

Sincerely,

Melissa Roberts
VP of Strategy and Economic Development
Enterprise Center in Johnson County