



Date: March 06, 2020

To: Chairwoman Caryn Tyson and Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee Members

From: Joseph Hackney, City Administrator

Re: Testimony in Opposition to SB 396

Chairwoman Tyson and Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 396 on behalf of the City of Valley Falls.

In 2019 alone, our organization would have lost a total of \$57,293.92 had this proposed bill been in effect. As an example, this represents fifteen percent of all revenue that is brought into our general fund in 2019.

This money is used in a variety of ways, like addressing infrastructure needs and paying for critical public safety personnel. To be clear, taking this fifteen percent of revenue away would have devastating impacts.

Like many small communities, Valley Falls is faced with overwhelming infrastructure needs. A portion of the money that would be taken away under this bill has already been a part of infrastructure planning discussions. Do not misunderstand: this money is essential in our efforts to make critical infrastructure repairs.

Valley Falls is in a unique position in Jefferson County. We are approximately twenty-five minutes away from the Sheriff's department location in Oskaloosa. This reality has motivated the community to prioritize city police presence. Having an adequate public safety response time is critical to the welfare of this community.

Finally, the City is currently paying a twenty-year bond issue. This debt obligation is non-negotiable for the community. Should our revenue decline dramatically, we would need to make cuts from other critical programs in order to make these payments.

Please be fully aware that the City Council and Mayor of Valley Falls stand in opposition of this bill. Historically, this community has stepped up and made needed investments in services that would not have happened otherwise. We all have admiration for our County entity; however this community is positioned in the northern half of Jefferson County, and is largely “out of sight, out of mind.” The money being discussed in SB 396 will be effectively used in this community. If taken away, we do not have confidence that Jefferson County will invest back in Valley Falls the almost sixty thousand dollars we have lost.

Based on this testimony, the City of Valley Falls requests you not to pass out SB 396.

Sincerely,

Joseph Hackney
City Administrator
City of Valley Falls, Kansas

CC:
The Vindicator
Valley Falls City Council
Mayor Lucy Thomas
Senator Marci Francisco