

Wes Griffith

2593 North 156th Terrace

Basehor, Kansas 66007

Representatives,

I am here today advocating for the passage of House Bill 2020 and House Bill 2021. My background of both past and ongoing service to our communities lend to a unique experience and knowledge of our veterans who would be most benefited from a state veterans home facility.

While serving in the U.S. Army for over 20 years, encompassing tours of duty in both Iraq and Afghanistan, I have witnessed the onset of trauma, both physical and mental, that was thrust on many of our valuable citizens. Having recently celebrated my 20th year anniversary with the Overland Park Police Department, I have had the privilege to work in different areas of the department. Through all of this, I find my work with our states veterans as a Veterans Crisis Intervention Team member as some of my most rewarding times.

The passage of these bills will provide our veteran community with an important link in the care of these living legacies. Each of our two existing locations provide critical services to their area veteran populations. They also accentuate the need for a third location in northeast Kansas. The current VA hospital and outpatient facilities in Leavenworth, KS, collocated with Fort Leavenworth and the Greater Kansas City metro area, with its assorted veteran service centers, serve to promote the area as a place for our veterans to reside and raise their families.

Admittedly, \$17.5M, when measured against the many other presented needs of the state, will lead to a hard decision. Please know that funding our veterans is always a smart bet. We are not only servicing our veterans with this facility but influencing a new generation of Kansans to consider public service of all kinds. That is a future worth investing in.

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