

March 15, 2021

**Senate Commerce Committee
Written Testimony in Support of SB 124
Scot Rigby, City of Wichita**

Chairman Olson and members of the Committee;

The City of Wichita supports SB 124 and the reauthorization of STAR Bond Districts. Over the past ten years, the City has established two Star Bonds Districts composed of multiple phases of development that are generating significant tourism activity from outside the region and from outside the state of Kansas. These STAR bond projects are generating new tourism dollars for the State and Wichita but are also providing crucial opportunities for Wichita to demonstrate to event attendees that Wichita is a great place to relocate their business.

In creating our districts and submitting them for project approval from the State, Wichita has been conservative in visitor generation projections, as well as fiscal analysis, building in extra debt service coverage and requiring performance standards and reporting requirements from our venue operators and commercial developers.

The venues and amenities that STAR bonds have assisted in creating are resulting in a new, positive perspective from visitors and businesses considering Wichita. In 2019, more than 1.5M visitors came through the doors of the STAR funded venues, staying in our hotels, eating in our restaurants and shopping in our stores. We are hopeful that these STAR bond districts help Wichita grow and recover from this recession. A brief description of each our Wichita STAR Bond Districts is listed below and demonstrates how critical and valuable STAR bonds district have been in generating state and local tourism revenue, attracting critical talent, as well as building pride in our community. Again, the City of Wichita fully supports SB 124 and encourages you to act favorably upon it.

CITY OF WICHITA: RIVER DISTRICT- Established in 2010, the Wichita River District Phase 1 included three projects: the Keeper of the Plains sculpture, plaza and pedestrian bridge, the East Riverbank Redevelopment project and the WaterWalk fountain and public plaza area. The Keeper of the Plains sculpture is Wichita's most identified tourism destination and source of pride for Wichitans. Phase 2 included improvements to the west bank of the Arkansas River, north of the Douglas Street Bridge. Boat and bike rental facilities and storage for rowing shells, as well as improvements to Delano Park. The resulting tourism activity has already resulted in paying off the debt service of these projects.

The most recent amended project plan for this district provided funding to construct a new multi-sport stadium and attract a major league affiliated minor level baseball team to Wichita.

In Sept. 2018, the city announced an agreement to relocate the New Orleans MiLB team to Wichita for the 2020 season. The multi-sport stadium was completed in March 2020 and was ready for the first game of the 2020 season. Unfortunately, the pandemic caused the cancellation of the 2020 Minor League Baseball season. We are now preparing for the start of baseball this spring. The team operator projects to hold more than 200 events annually in the stadium including sports, concerts, festivals and other events hosting more than 500,000 people annually. The securing of a new facility with the ability to host professional sports and other events was in Cargill's commitment not only to stay and expand in Wichita but also has sparked a renewed interest from other businesses outside of Wichita to consider Wichita. Cargill viewed this amenity as a key component in determining that it would be able to attract and retain talent to fuel its growth. Additionally, with the AA baseball team's league of 15 other teams spread out across the mid-west and western United States, Wichita will see increased media exposure in those markets and may potentially see increased air service due to travel of the teams and their fan bases.

CITY OF WICHITA: K-96 GREENWICH Originally established in 2013, Phase 1 of the K-96/Greenwich project is a 106-acre development located primarily north of K-96 and anchored by a 142,000-square foot facility (Wichita Sports Forum) designed to host local, regional and national basketball, volleyball and soccer competitions, along with cheer, softball, baseball, football, dodgeball, etc. The initial development included a 116-room hotel adjacent to the Wichita Sports Forum. Today, development growth surrounding the Wichita Sports Forum exceeds 300,000-square feet of new commercial and hotel space. Included in the project were necessary improvements to the interchange at K-96 and Greenwich. The interchange has been instrumental in opening the northeast area of Wichita for new residential, commercial, and business development. In just its first year of operation, the Sports Forum exceeded one million attendees from across the Midwest.

In 2017, the City requested and received State approval for the redevelopment and expansion of the Stryker multi-sport facility. The Stryker multi-sport facility is composed of ten fully lighted artificial turf fields and one full regulation sized indoor, climate controlled turf field opened for play in late spring 2019. In the first eight months of operations, Stryker hosted youth and collegiate soccer, lacrosse, football, and other sporting events. In addition, Stryker hosted 451 teams over six tournaments, with weekend attendance of 8,000 to 10,000. Attendance from outside the Wichita region is 45% and the high attendance has already required the City to fund additional parking to be built. On February 15, 2020, Stryker hosted an exhibition soccer match between the MLS Sporting KC and OKC Energy professional soccer teams drawing fans from across Kansas as well as pulling fans up from Oklahoma.