

**Written Testimony On Behalf of the Kansas Crossing Casino
House Bill 2740**

Bruce Christenson, Owner

**House Federal and State Affairs Committee
March 22, 2022**

Chairman Barker, Vice Chair Arnberger, Ranking Member Ruiz and Members of the Committee:

My name is Bruce Christenson and I am the owner of the Kansas Crossing Casino, which is located in Crawford County. The Kansas Crossing is one of the four state owned and operated casinos that were authorized by the passage of Senate Bill 66 in 2007. Since the four casinos have been operational, they have generated \$1.04 billion in gaming revenue that has been distributed to the State of Kansas (\$849.7 million), local governments within gaming zones (\$115.8 million), and the Problem Gambling and Addictions Grant Fund administered by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (\$77.2 million) (this in addition to the significant amounts of income, property and sales taxes that are paid to the state and local units of government).

The Kansas Crossing Casino operates under a contract that was granted by the State of Kansas. Because of this, we must operate within the bounds of our contract. Therefore, we cannot support any legislative action that would violate the terms of our contract. We ask that you keep this mind as the legislative process unfolds. Additionally, we ask that this legislation not do anything that would bring additional gaming operators into the Southeast Kansas zone.

With that said, the timing of this hearing could not be better. Last weekend marked the 1st and 2nd rounds of the NCAA men's basketball tournament. This is one of the largest sports wagering weekends of the year where thousands of Americans flock to sports books in casinos all across the country. Unfortunately Kansans don't have the ability to do this right now unless they travel outside of the state. Many Kansans are going to places like Iowa to engage in sports wagering and because of this our state is losing out on the economic benefit of people of who want to go to a casino and place a bet on a sporting event. This hurts our restaurants, hotels, and other Kansas businesses.

We are well aware that Kansans want to be able engage in sports wagering here in our home state. This is why we have been proponents of amending Kansas law to allow for Kansans to engage in sports wagering for many years now. We are hopeful that 2022 will be the year that we can make this a reality and at this time next year Kansans won't need to travel to Iowa, Las Vegas, or some other destination to participate in legal sports wagering. And consequently, Kansas can reap the economic benefits of keeping our citizens here at home as they make bets on NCAA tournament games.

Just like any gaming activity, sports wagering is heavily regulated for good reason. It is critical that Kansans who participate in sports wagering know that they can trust that a casino sports book is being run with integrity and that it follows all pertinent laws and regulations. Our casinos employ dozens of people that are highly trained to design procedures to ensure that all gaming activities are conducted in strict accordance with the law. This is why we believe that casinos are in the best position to effectively manage sports wagering operations in Kansas. We have the

experience and knowhow to do this. Working with our regulators at the Kansas Lottery and the Kansas Racing and Gaming Commission, we have demonstrated our ability to run effective gaming operations since the Kansas Crossing and Boot Hill came into existence.

Despite our desire to see a good sports wagering bill be enacted by the Legislature, there have been past disagreements between the casinos, the administration, and others wanting to engage in the gaming business in Kansas that have prevented a bill from being passed. We strongly supported Senate Bill 84 last year, which passed the Kansas Senate on a vote of 26-11. But we also opposed the bill that was considered in this committee and on the House floor last year. We know that legislators are growing tired of this issue and want to see the parties come together and resolve their differences. This is why we have negotiated in good faith with Chairman Barker, the administration, other legislators, and key stakeholders to work towards finding a bill that everyone can support. And we will continue these efforts as the process moves forward. With that said, we still have concerns about several provisions in the bill, such as tax rates, i-lottery provisions, access to legal remedies under our contracts and records retention, but we are committed to continuing to work with you to find mutually agreeable solutions so that we can move this bill forward and eventually get a bill on the governor's desk.

Thank you for considering our perspective on this important piece of legislation. We hope that we can all see sports wagering in Kansas become a reality.