



March 13, 2023

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 2448, AN ACT concerning the legislature; relating to compensation, salary and retirement benefits of members thereof; creating the legislative compensation commission; prescribing powers and duties of the commission; authorizing the commission to set rates of compensation for members of the legislature; establishing procedures for review and possible rejection of such rates of compensation by the legislature; eliminating the previously established compensation commission.

H.B. 2448 creates an independent citizen commission that will study and determine legislative compensation and make recommendations on other related benefits. The commission is made up of nine members and those members are appointed by legislative leadership and the governor. The appointees of the Senate President and the Speaker of the House must be former legislators. Current legislators, employees of the legislative branch and registered lobbyists are prohibited from serving on the commission.

The commission would meet, and every four years make a comprehensive study of the compensation, salary and retirement benefits of the members of the legislature. The commission would set the rates of compensation for members of the legislature. They would also make recommendations related to retirement benefits for members of the legislature.

The amount of compensation as determined by the independent citizen commission would be reported to the legislature prior to December 1 each year the commission meets. Such rate of compensation established by the commission shall be the rate of compensation for members of the legislature unless, prior to 30 days after the commencement of the legislative session next occurring after submission the legislature adopts a concurrent resolution rejecting the commission's determination.

We support the creation of an independent citizen commission to determine legislative compensation because we believe in representative democracy. It is our steadfast belief that legislative service should result in neither financial wealth nor extreme financial hardship. We also believe that it is of critical importance that Kansas citizens have the utmost trust in the legislative process and in those that are elected to serve. Allowing an independent citizen commission to determine the compensation of legislators removes questions concerning legislators voting to increase their own pay, thereby increasing trust in the process.

An article in 19<sup>th</sup> News from October of 2021 reports that 19 states have citizen commission or panels that either determine or make recommendations related to legislative compensation. In

addition, the article cites a report done by the New American Leaders recommending the formation of these commissions as a way to “reduce public backlash and build trust.”

To be clear, H.B. 2448 does not raise or lower pay for Kansas Legislators. If enacted, the commission would make the determination of whether compensation for legislators should be raised, lowered or remain at the current \$88.66 per day – a figure that has remained in place since the 1990s. It is our hope that the commission would, after much study and careful consideration, base compensation on a figure that allows Kansans from all income levels to serve their state in the Kansas Legislature. Kansans are best served and the legislature is most productive as a deliberative body when citizens from all walks of life and backgrounds can serve.

Thank you for your consideration and we urge the Committee to report this legislation favorable for passage.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason P. Watkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jason P. Watkins

Wichita Regional Chamber of Commerce