



THE CITY OF  
**HESSTON**

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March 22, 2021

Chairman Kelly and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony in support of HB 2398.

I am a lifelong Kansan, and aside from my 4 years at Wichita State, I have been a resident of Hesston my entire life. Likewise, my wife is also from Hesston and we intentionally and proudly raised our daughter here. I've had the privilege to be a part of the Hesston City Council for 14 years and I've served as Mayor of Hesston for 11 years.

Looking back, I had many opportunities available to me through the Hesston school system, the community recreation department, and city sponsored activities. Hesston had a vibrant downtown with many independent merchants. And there were many amenities afforded by a strong tax base with two locally owned manufacturing plants.

While manufacturing still happens in Hesston, things are not what they used to be. AGCO (formerly Hesston Corporation) is no longer based out of Kansas and most of the executive management team no longer resides in Harvey County. And the number of locally owned retail stores has declined, including the closing of Hesston's only grocery store.

When I meet with other Kansas mayors through the League of Municipalities, a common topic of conversation is how to maintain, let alone grow, the economies of small-town Kansas. We repeatedly ask how we can draw new industries into Kansas and our own communities. Understandably, it is something I think about a lot.

So, when I learned about the possibilities for Hesston and other Kansas communities through HB 2398, I was immediately interested, as it clearly defines a NEW industry in Kansas. I saw the vast potential it brings for the expansion of economic activity to our state, particularly rural Kansas.

Our communities have many needs that increased revenue from HB 2398 can serve. There are opportunities for redevelopment of Main Street, support of our school systems, increased local construction activity, and enhancements within our health care and senior facilities.

Passing this bill can and will have an immediate impact on Kansas communities. It has the potential to leave a lasting positive impact on our state. As a Kansan and as a small town mayor, I request your support in advancing HB 2398.

David K. Kauffman  
Mayor