



David T. Dennis
Commissioner - Third District

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS

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To: Chairman Thompson and House Local Government Committee Members

March 17, 2021

Re: SB 53

Chairman Thompson and members of the committee. My name is David Dennis, County Commissioner for the 3rd District in Sedgwick County, and I am testifying on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners of Sedgwick County, Kansas, in support of SB 53. This is a bill that would allow Sedgwick County to establish a charter commission, specific to Sedgwick County, and corrects a gap inadvertently left open by the Kansas Legislature when it granted Sedgwick County urban status back in 2018.

Current law provides that the board of county commission of any county declared to be an "urban area" be entitled to establish a charter commission. Unfortunately, when Sedgwick County attained urban county status the charter commission provided under current Kansas law requires that we appoint Johnson County members. The bill before you today mirrors the current makeup of the charter commission established by K.S.A. 19-2682, with the exception that Sedgwick County members and stakeholders replace Johnson County members.

The charter commission, used by Johnson County in 2000, was an effective means of creating their current county structure and form of government. While Sedgwick County has no current plan to create a charter commission, such commission could effectively allow a cross-section of Sedgwick County citizens to weigh in on and/or explore issues of consolidation, expansion and reorganization. Ultimately, any proposed charter derived by the efforts of a charter commission would be subject to a public hearing and a vote of the citizens of Sedgwick County.

The Kansas Legislature has recognized that not all counties in Kansas are the same. Urban counties such as Sedgwick and Johnson have issues that are unique to counties with a large population base. This is the reason why in 2018 Sedgwick County lobbied the Kansas Legislature to be designated an urban area. Yet having urban area designation without the authority for a Sedgwick County charter commission leaves the process incomplete. Please support Sedgwick County's efforts to correct the omission in 2018 and support SB 53.

Thank you very much for your consideration this bill.

David T. Dennis
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Sedgwick County ... working for you