



CITY OF TOPEKA

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House Taxation Committee

HB 2732

Gage Park Improvement Authority Act

Whitney Damron
On behalf of the
City of Topeka

March 14, 2022

Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the City of Topeka, we would like to provide our support through this written testimony to HB 2732 that would enable the creation of the Gage Park Improvement Authority to further support what many consider to be the crown jewel of the Golden City.

By way of information, early in this year we were made aware of efforts by the Topeka Zoo, the Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Department and the Kansas Children's Discovery Center to seek enabling legislation that would allow for the creation of a special taxing district, subject to local government and voter approval, to enhance the amenities of these three participating entities.

As the City of Topeka only recently was able to see the formal proposal, which is before you today, the Governing Body of the City of Topeka has not had an opportunity to formally consider this legislation and confirm is formal support. However, the Governing Body has been made aware of the concept, the partners, and the potential for enhanced funding for the amenities of Gage Park and we are lending our support to HB 2732 and look forward to working with all stakeholders as this legislation moves forward.

Gage Park, created in 1899, is one of the leading attractions of Shawnee County, attracting tens of thousands of people from within Shawnee County and beyond each and every year.

Current amenities of Gage Park include:

- The Topeka Zoo and Conservation Center and the Kay McFarland Japanese Garden
- Kansas Children's Discovery Center
- Miniature Train
- Gage Park All-War Memorial
- Blaisdell Family Aquatic Center
- Helen Hocker Theater
- Reinish Rose Garden
- Athletic Fields

HB 2733 will create exciting opportunities for program growth by the amenities located within Gage Park through this innovative financing tool that will complement taxpayer support, user fees, patron donations, and other current sources of funding.

The City of Topeka is excited to see what opportunities and enhancements can come to Gage Park through the enactment of HB 2732 and encourage the Committee's favorable consideration.

On behalf of the City of Topeka, we appreciate your consideration of these remarks.

WBD