

Proponent Testimony Statement Regarding HB 2021

“Authorizing the issuance of bonds for the construction of a state veterans home.”

Chairman Billinger, Ranking Member Hawk and Senators,

The purpose of HB 2021 is to provide state financial support to construct a skilled nursing facility for veterans in northeast Kansas through a construction grant program administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. A Veterans Administration grant of federal dollars will defray 65% of the construction cost.

Other existing facilities proudly serve veterans near Winfield and near Dodge City. Both of these facilities are south and west of our state’s center of population. The center of population for Kansas is in Chase County, three miles north of Strong City. Therefore, **the skilled nursing facility proposed by this bill will serve veterans in a geographically unserved portion of the state.**

Accordingly, this bill supports geographic equity for veterans. If a veteran is living in a facility far from family, there is strong sense of isolation and a negative mental health impact. Families in northeast Kansas will be able to visit this proposed skilled nursing facility easily and more often; thereby **improving the mental health and enhancing quality of life of veterans.**

The **current availability of skilled nursing care is low.** Aging veterans need skilled nursing care and this facility, once constructed, will add to capacity for such care. Operation of this facility will be supported by federal dollars in the appropriations of the Veterans Administration.

The House Appropriations Committee has already approved HB 2021. This project is **the top legislative priority of many veterans groups from across Kansas** for the current legislative session. I request the support of all members of the committee.

Respectfully submitted by
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