

**Testimony on SB 331 on designating Flint Hills Nature trail state park and Little
Jerusalem Badiands state park**

To

The Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

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SB 331 seeks to amend K.S.A. 2017 Supp. 32-837.

I am an avid cyclist and support the state's continued efforts to make Kansas an attractive area to both live and visit. My family and I have frequently used the Flint Hills Nature Trail both for cycling and hiking. We enjoy the trail and visiting the towns that are near the trail, i.e., traveling via the trail from town to town.

Kansas' Flint Hills are an amazing, unique feature of Kansas that tells a geologic tale special to this area. It attracts and "wows" those who visit them. The Flint Hills Nature Trail is a perfect way to enjoy the Flint Hills. The Flint Hills Nature Trails attract cyclists and other tourists to the area; promote better health in Kansas by providing residents with a place to walk and hike; and, provides a location for educating our young about the importance of health and nature.

I am aware that cyclists rent hotels and frequent restaurants in the area while using the Flint Hills Nature Trail.

The Flint Hills Nature Trail is the longest rail-trail and Kansas, and seventh longest in America. The trail is open to pedestrians, horses, cyclists, and any non-motorized vehicle. From the perspective of a cyclist, the trail offers a variety of scenery, recreational areas to rest, and many entry/exit points to choose from – this appeals to all levels of cyclists.

State parks and open space improve our physical and psychological health, strengthen our communities, and make our cities, counties, and state more attractive places to live and work. If the Flint Hills Nature Trail becomes a state park, it will undoubtedly benefit from the backing of state resources to maintain this valuable resource. There is an immense value in having the backing of the state behind a park, and KDWP will be able to provide the support, infrastructure and maintenance that the Flint Hills Nature Trail requires to maintain its value to the cycling community.

Given the significance of the land/trail system to cyclists and value to the surrounding areas, I respectfully request that Flint Hills Nature Trail be designated as a part of the Kansas state park system.

I, Catherine Walberg, appreciate the opportunity to address the Committee and request favorable passage of the bill.

*Respectfully,
Catherine Walberg, J.D.*