

Remarks by Elijah Redington in support of HB2267

I want to thank the chairman and the committee for allowing me to testify today in support of HB 2267. My name is Elijah Redington, I was born and raised in Newton, Kansas and graduated from Newton High School last year. I currently attend the University of Iowa.

Over the past three years, I have been working with my peers, including Mr. Blaufuss, to create a Kansas Youth Advisory Council. During this time, we have reached out to all 449 high schools in the state of Kansas and their student governments. Just over 100 student councils, high school principals, and student body presidents responded, all of which expressed interest and excitement over the prospect of such an organization. Among each of the respondents, none were opposed to the bill. This bill would give youth in Kansas an insight into the state government in a previously inaccessible manner, potentially inspiring more young people to a future career in public service and allowing them to put their civic responsibility in action.

The member requirements outlined in HB2267 ensure that individuals on this council will be well educated on the issues facing Kansans today, engaged in their community, and represent diverse backgrounds and experiences.

These members will work together to outline the specific rules and procedures that the group will follow as well as its own system of leadership. The director of the Kansas human rights commission or their designee will be responsible for overseeing the council and will ensure that when forming rules, they follow all requirements under Kansas law. Noted in the bill, the first 10 appointed members of this council will serve only one-year terms. These first 10 members will be doing much of the frameworking so that future members can easily join with set guidelines and expectations.

More importantly, this bill is a resource to you, the lawmakers. Data from a study conducted in 2015 by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) found the average age of Kansas Legislators to be 58 years old. There is no problem with this when discussing the Kansas Aqueducts or food sales tax; however, on issues of teenage mental health, high school policies, and forming age requirements for products, there is a disconnect between the legislature and what youth are experiencing in their daily lives. The Kansas Youth Advisory Council would be a direct line of communication between legislators and youth so that the council could provide a second opinion and review the legislation that would most directly affect young people.

I was previously a member of the Governor's Behavioral Health Services Planning Council as one of two youth delegates. While there, I was able to bring new perspectives and fresh ideas to the group, as when discussing teenage mental health,

the council would merely be speculating about a population they were not a part of. My fellow youth delegate and I made a significant impact on this council via our firsthand knowledge and contributions; therefore, a similar impact could be made to the entire legislative body if the Kansas Youth Advisory Council is created. Furthermore, the Advisory Council is a resource that every facet of the state government can rely on, from the governor's office to individual lawmakers.

I appreciate your time today to speak in support of HB2267 and ask for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Elijah Paul Redington