



Good afternoon, Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Mason, Ranking Minority member Gartner and members of the committee. My name is Dené Mosier and I live in Topeka. I am the President and CEO of the Kansas Children's Discovery Center.

I strongly support HB 2732, which would allow the citizens of Shawnee County the opportunity to create a Gage Park Improvement Authority to develop and grow one of the most treasured areas in Topeka for generations to come. I have led the Discovery Center since 2015 and in that time, I have seen firsthand the importance of this community's nonprofit children's museum. As a former preschool and elementary school teacher and administrator, I first came to support the museum as a critical educational resource for young children in Shawnee County. But I have since seen the museum grow into a major tourist attraction, economic driver, and statewide educational institution, all without ongoing public funding.

The Discovery Center hosts over 95,000 visitors annually, and an additional 6,000 individuals in Mobile Museum outreach events throughout the state. More than 1 in 4 museum visitors live outside Shawnee County, making the museum a significant tourist attraction that drives spending and economic growth. In our ten years of operation, we have attracted more than 770,000 visitors from all 50 states and 23 countries.

We are committed to access for every child. More than one in ten Discovery Center admissions are free or donor subsidized, including more than 1,000 annual Museums for All admissions for families receiving TANF or WIC, and over 5,000 field trip visitors from schools with a high percentage of children receiving free or reduced cost lunches. Special programs serve children with incarcerated mothers, medically fragile children, children with an autism spectrum disorder and children in foster care. We have clearly demonstrated our ability to use our resources to foster a lifelong love of learning for all children.



Gage Park, where the museum is located, is truly a gem for our community, but the park has enormous potential to grow with community investment. The institutions located in Gage Park have a long history of positive collaboration that has benefited our full community. Dollars generated by this authority granted to the Discovery Center will not support everyday museum operations, but capital projects, special exhibits and outreach programs. In short: growth, that would not be possible without this investment. We have strong data to support the economic impact these dollars will have, Special exhibitions, the kind that these dollars would fund, have increased overall attendance by up to 25 percent and out of state visitors by up to 50 percent. Without these dollars, we would continue to operate and serve children in need, but major capital expansion and special exhibitions, the kind that can generate true economic growth, would likely be out of reach.

We have clearly demonstrated our ability to be good stewards of investment and plan to engage broadly with the community to ensure this measure is enthusiastically supported. I firmly believe voters will find the incremental increase in sales tax to be a worthy and sound investment in our community's future. I ask you to allow the voters a chance to have their voices heard on this issue by voting to approve HB 2732 and put this deserving initiative on the ballot.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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