



Date: Feb. 14, 2022

To: Senate Transparency and Ethics

From: Allison Mazzei, President of the Kansas Association of Broadcasters

RE: Written Testimony on SB 386 – Proponent

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Good Afternoon Chairwoman Bowers and members of the Committee,

I'm Allison Mazzei, president of the Kansas Association of Broadcasters. I represent the 260 broadcast stations that are members of the KAB.

I write today to express support of SB 386 because it would diminish the financial costs broadcast journalists encounter when trying to obtain open records. Fair and affordable KORA fees are essential for journalists so that they may conduct important investigations, which, in turn, informs the public, holds leaders accountable, and sustains our democracy.

Many times, KORA requests result in significant charges for labor and copying, which prohibit journalists from pursuing stories and/or impedes their investigation. The KAB and the journalists we represent understand that it takes staff time and effort to execute KORA requests and agree that reasonable compensation should take place to cover said labor. We encourage (and provide educational resources) to our members on how to submit specific and detailed KORA requests. There are times, however, when requests are broad so as not to preclude useful information journalist may not be aware of. There are also instances when the fees assessed for requests are not reasonable, such as the example provided by my fellow conferee Rachel Summerfield (News Director KSNW).

SB 386 also takes into account the cumbersome, out-of-state, commercial requests we know many agencies receive. SB 386 is written to exclude these entities from consideration.

This bill also reinforces the Kansas Attorney General's KORA fee guidelines (that are currently posted on his website) by ensuring "a public agency should at all times charge the lowest possible fee." A recent example of this scenario occurred last year when KWCH TV (Wichita) made a KORA request with City of Salina. KWCH requested email correspondence that included 10 key words within a given timeframe. The city charged them \$256 for their initial request review and said an additional 371 emails needed further review before they could be released, which would take 16-20 more hours. They estimated that amount of work would cost \$512-\$640 based on a processing fee of \$16 for every 30 minutes of staff time. KWCH and KAB consider that rate to be exorbitant. While the deputy city manager said he was the one processing the request, it is work that office staff are more than capable of completing—who are able to bill their time at a much more affordable rate.

Kansas newsrooms are in a similar situation as most businesses—they must do more with less and on a tighter budget. This bill provides an affordable path forward that benefits journalists and, in turn, Kansans.

I appreciate your time in discussing this important matter.

Thank you,

Allison Mazzei

President, Kansas Association of Broadcasters

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