

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

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Good Morning – Madame Chairman, Committee Members, Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Ray Barmby, I live in Olathe and am a self employed economic development financing consultant having spent more than 40 years working with cities, counties and business enterprises across Kansas solving their fixed asset financing needs. I am a former elected Mayor and Council Member of the City of Olathe.

I am proud of having prepared the first housing needs analysis required pursuant to the Rural Housing Incentive District Act (the “Act”) resulting in its acceptance by the Secretary of Commerce and approval of an issuance of municipal bonds as the means of funding infrastructure development.

I appear in support of Senate Bill 363. Your recommendation for full Senate adoption of the amendment to the Act in no way detrimentally affects Johnson, Sedgwick, Shawnee, Douglas or Wyandotte Counties. The proposed amendment is one which should be embraced and strongly supported by those counties if for no other reason that its adoption into law can and will help to sustain and, in some instances, preserve communities into the future. I am sure we can all agree that rural communities need jobs and workers if they are to survive. But I suggest to you that the endless pursuit by our Department of

Commerce for those rural employers and their paychecks is stymied by the lack of decent, safe and affordable single or multi family housing. It is not sufficient for a community to solve most, if not all, of its new housing needs through expansion or development of mobile home parks. Given a choice, every community would choose permanent forms of housing rather than that which has the appearance of being temporary. By and large a single or multi-family housing development can be completed within the same approximate time span for the erection of a manufacturing plant. The Act currently prohibits any city in Leavenworth, Reno, Riley, Butler, Saline and possibly Finney, Crawford and Cowley counties benefiting from the Act which the Legislature adopted into law nine years ago because of a population restriction of 40,000. SB 363 raises that population ceiling to 60,000 thereby allowing communities in those counties to broaden their respective economic and tax bases.

Speaking selfishly I hope SB 363 is adopted in this session of the Legislature for I believe that the residents and businesses of the largest counties will be looked upon in the future as a source of funding with which our State Government takes steps to preserve those rural communities that have not been able to grow in terms of population and jobs. The big counties will grow economically and in population but for rural communities the future is not as optimistic unless we can place into their hands a tool with which they can grow and prosper. That tool is the Rural Housing Incentive District Act which I ask you to amend in favor of those 100 counties which are not so blessed with a Boeing, Goodyear, General Motors, Sprint or Hallmark facility.

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