



To: House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development

From: Lisa Stubbs, Chairperson of the Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority
and Mike Munson, Board Member of the Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority

Date: February 15, 2023

Re: House Bill 2336 – proponent testimony

On behalf of the Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority (“MTAA”), we appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2336. The MTAA is formed pursuant to K.S.A. 27-327 et seq. and operates Philip Billard Municipal Airport, located within the City of Topeka, and Topeka Regional Airport (f/k/a Forbes Air Force Base), located within Shawnee County. The City of Topeka’s mayor with approval from the city council, and the Board of Commissioners of Shawnee County, appoint the members of the Board of Directors which govern the MTAA.

Philip Billard Municipal Airport and Topeka Regional Airport are vital to the economies of Topeka, Shawnee County and northeast Kansas, and present the opportunity for substantial economic growth.¹ Unfortunately, both airports are outdated and in need of substantial renovation and modernization. Our airports lack hangars suitable for modern aircraft and lack the buildings and facilities necessary to attract businesses to Topeka and Shawnee County. While the MTAA and our community leaders are dedicated to the redevelopment and renovation of our airports, the MTAA is in need of additional tools and resources to assist in these efforts.

One tool available to the MTAA is the use of general obligation bonds to finance improvements. See K.S.A. 27-334(b). While the legislature vested an airport authority such as the MTAA with this authority in 1978, the MTAA’s authority to issue general obligation bonds without an election is capped at \$1 million. This amount has not been changed since 1978. For this reason, we urge this committee to increase the MTAA’s bonding authority through HB 2336.

¹ Most recent available data from KDOT Aviation Impact Study pegs Billard Airport at \$20 million in total annual output and Topeka Regional Airport at \$162 million in total annual output. See <https://www.ksdot.gov/Assets/wwwksdotorg/bureaus/divAviation/pdf/2016EISExecutiveSummary.pdf>

The MTAA Board is currently evaluating a number of exciting improvements at our airports. Most notable is a site development project at Topeka Regional Airport relating to an MRO facility for NIAR WERX, which alone promises to bring hundreds of jobs and ancillary business to Topeka, and assist in expanding our aviation footprint. The most recent estimate of site preparation expenses, including infrastructure and addressing substantial grade and drainage issues, is \$20 million. This figure does not include the additional and substantial expense of constructing the MRO hangar. In addition to the MRO facility development, the MTAA Board is also considering redevelopment of the Topeka Regional Business Center and constructing new hangars along the Topeka Regional Airport flightline, as well as new t-hangars and a box hangar adjacent to the terminal building at Billard Airport. Increasing the MTAA's authority to issue general obligation bonds is essential to facilitate the improvements necessary to modernize our airports and drive economic growth in our area.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.