



March 13, 2023

Kansas Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation
The Honorable Caryn Tyson, Chair
Kansas State Capitol, Room 548-S
Topeka, Kansas 66612

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill No. 2176

Chair Tyson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment in support of HB No. 2176, creating the Arkansas City Area Public Library District Act.

Arkansas City Public Library does not have statutory authority to levy its taxes. Instead, the City of Arkansas City serves as the taxing authority. Compared to other libraries with similar service populations in the state, the Arkansas City Public Library receives 40% less in tax receipts on average. In 2021, the average income in tax receipts of libraries our size was \$650,000. Neighboring Winfield received \$545,000, and Arkansas City Public Library received only \$393,000. Since increasing the mills allowed by the current charter ordinance isn't likely, and it seems like a challenging solution since 27% of Arkansas City Public Library users reside outside the city limits, the best option is to create a new library district.

Recent data has shown that 17.8% of children in Cowley County live below the poverty level, and nearly 4 in 10 third graders test below the basic level in English Language Arts. Children who live in poverty typically have low levels of literacy development, but when they have access to books, they read more, which improves their reading and writing abilities. If a new library district were established, the Arkansas City Public Library would have opportunities to hire additional staffing that would enhance outreach services and educational programming in disadvantaged neighborhoods and rural areas allowing staff to meet patrons where they are and improve literacy rates within the district.

We know that there are many pieces of legislation under consideration. However, libraries can help address access to resources due to poverty, rural isolation, and other disadvantages. The Arkansas City Public Library needs the community's help. I urge you to make it a reality by passing HB No. 2176, allowing local citizens to vote on creating the Arkansas City Area Public Library District Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "C. Tyson", written over a horizontal line.

City Manager
118 W. Central Ave
Arkansas City, Ks. 67005