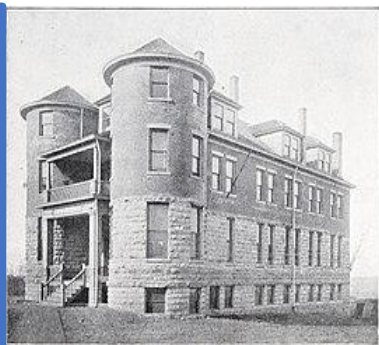


WESTERN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION OF THE A.M.E. CHURCH



1111 N. 8th Street
Kansas City, Kansas 66101

To: Rep. Troy Waymaster, Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Re: HB 2398 – Oral Testimony - Neutral
From: Rev. Stacy R. Evans, Chairperson
Western University Association of the A.M.E. Church
Date: March 11, 2025

Greetings Chairman Waymaster and members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present this testimony regarding House Bill No. 2398. My name is Rev. Stacy R. Evans, and I have served as Chairperson of the Western University Association of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church for 16 years. Since 1881, the Western University Association of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church has been the majority landowner and steward of the Quindaro Ruins. I am also a senior pastor in the A.M.E. Church with over 25 years of experience, holding all requisite degrees, licenses, and responsibilities.

I am here today to provide testimony on behalf of the Western University Association of the A.M.E. Church regarding the Quindaro Ruins Archaeological Park project proposed in HB 2398. As of this testimony submission, we take a neutral position on HB 2398.

Background on Ownership and Stewardship

The Quindaro Ruins, located in Northeast Kansas City, Kansas, is a Federally Designated National Commemorative Site and a historically significant Underground Railroad property. Approximately 95% of this site is privately owned by the Western University Association of the A.M.E. Church Board. Over the years, we have worked diligently to preserve this site and foster community engagement through partnerships with local, state, and federal institutions.

Our stewardship includes maintaining legal documentation such as current title searches, managing grants from organizations like the Sunflower Foundation and the Mellon Foundation (through UMKC),

collaborating with National Parks evaluations, and publishing research through institutions such as Johnson County Community College.

We also support efforts to honor pioneers like Marvin Robinson and Jesse Hope for their contributions to saving Quindaro.

Concerns Regarding HB 2398

While we appreciate the legislature's intent to allocate \$600,000 for developing a master plan for the Quindaro Ruins Archaeological Park, we have concerns about the lack of acknowledgment of our ownership and ongoing efforts to preserve this property. The current language in HB 2398 does not recognize that this land is privately owned by our organization.

Additionally:

- We are already conducting a professional concept design plan facilitated by Vireo Landscape, Architecture, Planning and Design Firm to enhance trails, signage, and other modern amenities. The project is scheduled to be completed by the 2026 World Cup.
- We do not intend to relinquish ownership, but are committed to preserving and developing this historic site responsibly.
- We look forward to continued collaborations with stakeholders like the Kansas Historic Society, to ensure any state-funded initiatives align with our vision for Quindaro's future.

Position on HB 2398

As stated, our position is neutral but can be moved to full support with these considerations:

1. **Acknowledgment of Ownership:** The bill should explicitly recognize that the Quindaro Ruins are privately owned by the Western University Association of the A.M.E. Church Board.
2. **Inclusion in Decision-Making:** Since we own the land, and we already have a plan in progress, our organization should be included in discussions alongside the Kansas Historical Society regarding how funds are allocated and utilized for Quindaro.
3. **Alignment with Existing Plans:** State-funded initiatives should support and complement our ongoing preservation efforts and development plans.

Conclusion

In summary, while we commend the legislature's commitment to preserving Kansas' historical landmarks through HB 2398, we urge amendments that acknowledge our ownership and allow meaningful collaboration in the decision-making processes. With these adjustments, we can fully support this bill and work together to ensure Quindaro's legacy is preserved for generations to come.

Thank you again for this opportunity to share our perspectives.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Stacy R. Evans, Chairperson
Western University Association of the A.M.E. Church

