



Kansas Recreation and Park Association

To: House Commerce, Chairman Tarwater

From: Erika Devore, Executive Director, Kansas Recreation and Park Association

Date: March 11, 2025

RE: HB 2346

Dear Chair Tarwater and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 2346. We support the intent of this legislation and its efforts to bring in sports tourism, as it aligns with our shared goals of providing economic development to cities and counties. However, we have several questions and concerns regarding both the introduced bill and the substitute version provided by the bill sponsor, which has yet to be formally introduced.

Support for Intent

We recognize the importance of addressing the issue of bringing in sports tourism to the state and commend the bill sponsor for bringing this matter forward. The provisions in HB 2346 take necessary steps to drive more economic development, which we believe could have a meaningful impact on cities, counties and the state.

Questions and Concerns

While we appreciate the direction of the bill, we seek further clarification on several key areas:

1. **Sports Tourism Grant Committee Composition** – We have concerns about how the sports tourism grant committee is formed and who would be represented. Currently, all committee appointments appear to be political appointees. Is there a way to include industry professionals on the committee to ensure a balanced and knowledgeable representation?
2. **Funding Allocation and Impact on Smaller Communities** – The bill appears to be heavily geared toward larger cities based on the allocation of funds. We are concerned that smaller communities, such as Derby, would be held to the same allocation minimum as larger cities like Wichita, which may create an inequitable distribution of resources.

3. **Grant Consideration for Annual Events** – The bill states:

“The committee shall not routinely award grants for the purpose of meeting operational expenses for an event that is repeated annually. However, the committee shall give consideration to annual events that may be moved out of Kansas because of a lack of financial support. When considering grants for such events, the committee shall consider the circumstances of any competitive bid process involving other out-of-state locations.”

We seek clarification on this provision, as it may place greater emphasis on retaining existing events rather than prioritizing efforts to attract new visitors and events to Kansas.

4. **Ensuring Access for All Communities** – To ensure communities that do not have sports commissions or destination marketing organizations (DMOs) can access grant opportunities, we suggest explicitly allowing local units of government—such as cities and recreation commissions—to be eligible applicants.
5. **Ensuring Equitable Access** – We need to ensure that communities of all sizes have equal access to the grant opportunity.

Concerns Regarding the Substitute Bill

1. **Grant Sponsor Definition (Section 3)** – The language states that a party “shall be required to serve as grant sponsor,” but the bill does not define “grant sponsor” or outline its responsibilities. Without clear guidance, public park and recreation agencies may face undue burdens.
2. **Eligibility for Grant Applications** – The bill states that it is for “sports-related organizations,” but this term is not defined. Clarification is needed to determine which entities qualify.

Clarifications Needed

1. **Definition of “Sports-Related Organizations” (Section 1)** – The assumption is that recreation commissions and city parks and recreation departments fall under this category, but the bill should explicitly confirm and define these terms.
2. **Definition of “Involving” in Relation to Professional Leagues** – The bill references not awarding grant project “involving” professional leagues. This term should be clearly defined to ensure that professional leagues can be involved as they are in multiple ways, such as upgrading facilities, sponsoring teams, or sponsoring events.

Recommendation

We urge the committee to carefully evaluate both the introduced and substitute versions of HB 2346 to ensure that the final legislation effectively meets its goals while addressing these concerns. We welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively on refining the bill to better serve the needs of the members of the Kansas Recreation and Park Association.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your leadership on this important issue and look forward to further discussion.

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