

February 11, 2026

Chairman Kessler and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2568. I write in support of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks' request to ratify changes to state park fee regulations, which are necessary to ensure long-term sustainability, safety, and quality of Kansas State Parks.

Kansas State Parks are more than recreational destinations—they are economic anchors for many communities across the state. Parks drive consistent visitation that supports nearby restaurants, grocery stores, gas stations, outfitters, lodging providers, and other small businesses, particularly in rural areas where tourism dollars play an outsized role in local economic stability. When park facilities are well-maintained and safe, visitation remains strong and communities benefit directly from that activity.

The proposed fee adjustments allow the Department to reinvest revenue back into park operations, infrastructure, and staffing. That reinvestment has a ripple effect at the local level. Reliable utilities, functional campgrounds, and adequately staffed parks encourage repeat visitation, longer stays, and positive visitor experiences—all of which translate into sustained economic activity in surrounding communities. Conversely, deferred maintenance and understaffed parks place that local economic benefit at risk.

It is also important to note that while the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is capable of supporting year-round camping in state parks, this type of use places significantly greater demands on park facilities, infrastructure, and maintenance resources. Extended stays accelerate wear on utilities, sites, and amenities and require increased staff time and operational support. The proposed fee structure appropriately reflects the intended use of state parks as short-term recreational destinations, rather than permanent or semi-permanent housing.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support House Bill 2568 and allow these necessary fee adjustments to move forward for the benefit of Kansas parks and the communities they support.

Respectfully submitted,

Erika Devore

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