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**OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF WAR**  
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

February 26, 2026

**KANSAS HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND MILITARY**

**Representative Rick James**  
**Chair, House Committee on Veterans and Military**

**Remarks of**  
**Michelle Richart**  
**Midwest Regional Liaison**  
**United States Department of War / Defense-State Liaison Office**

**Support of: HB 2767 – Establishing the Kansas Military Affairs Commission and prescribing the powers and duties thereof.**

**Testimony**

Chairman and honorable committee members, the Department of War is grateful for the opportunity to support the policies reflected in House Bill 2767, for the purpose of statutorily establishing the Kansas Military Affairs Commission. Formalizing this Commission in statute, including the military community's perspective and representation on the Commission, helps ensure unique operational requirements and military family priorities are considered across pertinent policy areas in Kansas both now and well into the future.

My name is Michelle Richart. I am the Midwest Regional Liaison at the United States Department of War Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

We represent the Department and establish relationships with state leaders across the country who are concerned for troops and their families' welfare by harmonizing state and federal law and regulation on policy problems of national significance. These are identified by the Office of the Secretary of War, the Military Departments, and the National Guard Bureau as areas where states can play a crucial role.

Across the nation, we have seen states recognize the value of having military community voices at the table, including military families. This inclusion strengthens mission readiness, addresses family concerns, and fosters deeper collaboration between communities and state leaders. The policies in Kansas HB 2767 take this vital step by statutorily establishing the Kansas Military Affairs Commission. This Commission will offer a platform for diverse voices within the military community to actively contribute toward shaping a statewide strategic plan which prioritizes the well-being of veterans and military families.

With nearly 77,000 service members and their families in Kansas, including the viewpoint of military families on this commission helps ensure unique operational requirements and military family priorities are considered.

Military community representation on state boards and councils can have a profound impact on creating livable communities, enhancing military mission readiness, and influencing family readiness factors that are critical in strategic basing decisions. The policies proposed in House Bill 2627 include appointing representatives of the broader military community throughout Kansas, who would bring a wealth of experience and diverse perspectives that can lead to more innovative solutions to community challenges. Understanding the specific needs of military families, such as community support, quality education, and employment opportunities for spouses, military community representatives can advocate for improvements in these areas.

When military families are supported in their communities it reduces stress and distractions for service members, allowing them to focus more effectively on their mission. Livable communities with robust support systems for military families can be a key factor in the decision of service members to continue their military career. Additionally, such communities are attractive to potential recruits who consider the quality of life for their families when deciding to join the military.

While the military has its internal support structures, these often focus on the immediate and internal aspects of military life. State boards and commissions such as the proposed Kansas Military Affairs Commission, on the other hand, address broader issues that intersect with civilian sectors, such as education and employment. One role of the Commission is to bridge the gap between military and civilian spheres, ensuring that the needs of military families are understood and met in the wider community context.

Such bodies often lead to long-term cost savings and efficiency improvements, providing a focused platform for addressing specific needs of the military community, which can streamline services and prevent the misallocation of resources, complementing existing structures by filling gaps in services and offering specialized insights that might otherwise be overlooked. The inclusion of the military community onto the Commission is a strategic decision to leverage their unique skills, perspectives, and experiences.

In closing, let me say that we are grateful for the tremendous effort that Kansas has historically given in supporting our Service members and their families. On behalf of the Department of War, we appreciate your consideration of the policy changes expressed in House Bill 2767.

Very Respectfully,

**MICHELLE RICHART**  
Midwest Regional Liaison  
Defense-State Liaison Office