

Written Testimony in Support of SB 261

My name is Richard Lee Watts Jr., and I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 261.

As currently written, K.S.A. 41-2623 and K.S.A. 2024 Supp. 41-311 prohibit me from being eligible to maintain a position I once held and restrict me—and others in similar circumstances—from participating in a bipartisan 501(c)(3) organization. I was previously involved with this organization in rebuilding connections within our community and making positive, lasting impacts.

It has been over twenty years since the incident that created this barrier. In that time, I have rebuilt my life and my career. I am a former successful executive officer, served on a board of directors, own and operate a three-year-old construction company that employs 11 people, and am a partner in a real estate investment group. I am 52 years old and committed to giving back to my community.

I regularly donate my time mentoring younger individuals to help them avoid life-altering decisions that can negatively affect them for the rest of their lives. I also serve on our local City Parks and Recreation Board, where my company has volunteered labor to clean up parks, paint fixtures, and even restore a caboose displayed in front of the police department.

SB 261 is designed to provide individuals like me—who have changed, rebuilt, and are actively contributing to society—the opportunity to fully participate again as citizens of the State of Kansas. This is a responsible and thoughtful update that supports rehabilitation, reentry, and accountability while maintaining safeguards through case-by-case review.

It is encouraging to see Kansas willing to examine practical solutions that reduce lifetime barriers and demonstrate that our justice system honors its commitment to rehabilitation. SB 261 sends a message that reform is possible and that positive contributions matter.

I respectfully ask that we work together to advance SB 261 and provide our communities with a stronger opportunity to grow, strengthen local economies, and recognize the value of rehabilitation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Richard Lee Watts Jr.