



# CITY OF TOPEKA

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To: Senate Committee on Judiciary  
From: Amanda Stanley, City of Topeka  
Date: March 3, 2025  
Re: Proponent Testimony for HB 2134

Chair Warren, distinguished members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the City of Topeka in support of House Bill 2134.

The City of Topeka processes thousands of records requests each year. These requests are not merely routine tasks but labor-intensive processes that require significant time and resources to ensure compliance with both open records laws and privacy laws designed to protect sensitive information. A substantial number of these requests originate from out-of-state media outlets, placing an undue burden on local taxpayers, who ultimately bear the cost of fulfilling them.

As the volume and complexity of records requests continue to rise—particularly with the increasing prevalence of electronic records—our staff faces an ever-growing workload. Last year alone, the City of Topeka processed 7,332 records requests. Even if we conservatively estimate that each request took just five minutes to fulfill, that amounts to over 611 hours of staff time dedicated solely to processing these requests. In reality, however, many requests take significantly longer—sometimes as much as 190 hours for a single request. These staff hours span multiple departments and include time spent retrieving, reviewing, and redacting documents to ensure compliance with the law.

It is also important to note that the City's current rate for processing records requests is already deeply discounted compared to the actual costs incurred. For example, the hourly rate for a city attorney handling Kansas Open Records Act (KORA) requests is just \$35—far below the true cost of providing legal and administrative support for these processes. While the current system does not fully recover the costs associated with fulfilling records requests, it does help mitigate some of the financial burden on taxpayers.

The City initially had concerns about HB 2134 in its original form. However, we appreciate Chairwoman Humphries' efforts to encourage stakeholders to find common ground. After extensive discussions, the bill was amended to its current form, which strikes a crucial balance between ensuring transparency and maintaining fiscal responsibility. By allowing cities like Topeka to recover at least a portion of the staff time required to process records requests—while also introducing new requirements for collaborative dialogue to help mitigate costs—the proposed framework prevents undue strain on municipal resources while upholding the public's right to access information.

We believe the bill's approach to handling records requests is both fair and efficient. Any changes that further limit the ability to recover staff costs would not only place additional strain on local governments but could also inadvertently reduce the quality of public services and transparency. We strongly urge the Committee to preserve the carefully negotiated compromise reflected in the current version of the bill.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. We remain committed to working collaboratively with the Committee to ensure that public policy continues to serve the best interests of all Kansans.