

SB 359
House Committee on Transportation
Proponent Testimony
March 6, 2024

Chairperson Francis and Members of the Committee:

Friends of the Topeka Zoo, Inc. (FOTZ) is a non-profit corporation whose mission is to enrich our community through wildlife conservation and education. FOTZ operates and manages the Topeka Zoo and Conservation Center.

Thanks to the support of our donors and the NE Kansas community, our 90 year old zoo is in the midst of a dynamic resurgence. We are in the end stages of finalizing our next master plan project which will significantly change the core of our zoo. This next project follows three consecutive multi-million-dollar projects that have been completed in the past 5 years.

The Topeka Zoo has more than 90 employees, 115 volunteer docents, 5,200 member households, and on average more than 260,000 guests a year, significantly more than the population of Shawnee County. We partner with a number of local organizations to positively impact our community and to improve the quality of life in Northeast Kansas. The Topeka Zoo has a regional draw for both its onsite attraction and its environmental education and science programs. It is the highest attended attraction in northeast Kansas outside of the Kansas City Metropolitan Area. We are proud to be the zoo located in the capitol of Kansas and are thankful for the support the Legislature has given us over the past few years.

As Senate Bill 359 moved through the process, several of our staff, docents, and board members noticed, with excitement, that the Sedgwick County Zoo was pursuing a specialized license plate. Like the Sedgwick County Zoo, we are confident our patrons and community members would enjoy showing that pride with a specialized license plate for the Topeka Zoo too!

With your support of an amendment to Senate Bill 359 to add the Topeka Zoo, our passionate supporters will be able to purchase a Topeka Zoo specialty plate. This will allow us to reach more people to spread the message of what we do at the Topeka Zoo while also raising revenue to support our mission. This additional revenue will also help us continue to be a vibrant zoo which helps increase tourism, attract new businesses and families, and increases economic growth for Topeka and Shawnee County.

Thank you for considering Senate Bill 359 and for considering our request.

Sincerely submitted on behalf of Friends of the Topeka Zoo, Inc.

Cynthia McCarvel
Development Director

Possible Language for Amendment Adding Topeka Zoo License Plate

Section 1. (a) On and after January 1, 2025, any owner or lessee of one or more passenger vehicles or trucks registered for a gross weight of 20,000 pounds or less, who is a resident of Kansas, upon compliance with the provisions of this section, may be issued one Topeka Zoo license plate for each such passenger vehicle or truck. Such license plate shall be issued for the same time as other license plates upon proper registration and payment of the regular license fee as provided in K.S.A. 8- 143, and amendments thereto, and either the payment to the county treasurer of the logo use royalty payment or the presentation of the annual logo use authorization statement provided for in subsection (b).

(b) The Friends of the Topeka Zoo, Inc. may authorize the use of the organization's logo to be affixed on license plates as provided by this section. Any motor vehicle owner or lessee may apply annually to the Friends of the Topeka Zoo, Inc. for use of such logo. Such owner or lessee shall pay an amount of not less than \$25 nor more than \$100 to the Friends of the Topeka Zoo, Inc. as a logo use royalty payment for each such license plate to be issued. The logo use royalty payment shall be paid to either:

- (1) The Friends of the Topeka Zoo, Inc., which shall issue to the motor vehicle owner or lessee, without further charge, a logo use authorization statement that shall be presented by the motor vehicle owner or lessee at the time of registration; or
- (2) the county treasurer.

(c) Any applicant for a license plate authorized by this section may make application for such license plate not less than 60 days prior to such person's renewal of registration date, on a form prescribed and furnished by the director of vehicles, and any applicant for such license plate shall either provide the annual logo use authorization statement provided for in subsection (b) or pay to the county treasurer the logo use royalty payment. Application for registration of a passenger vehicle or truck and issuance of the license plate under this section shall be made by the owner or lessee in a manner prescribed by the director of vehicles upon forms furnished by the director.

(d) No registration or license plate issued under this section shall be transferable to any other person.

(e) The director of vehicles may transfer a Topeka Zoo license plate from a leased vehicle to a purchased vehicle.

(f) Renewals of registration under this section shall be made annually, upon payment of the fee prescribed in K.S.A. 8-143, and amendments thereto, and in the manner prescribed in K.S.A. 8-132(b), and amendments thereto. No renewal of registration shall be made to any applicant until such applicant provides to the county treasurer either the annual logo use authorization

statement provided for in subsection (b) or the payment of the annual royalty payment. If such statement is not presented at the time of registration or sent by the Friends of the Topeka Zoo, or the annual royalty payment is not made to the county treasurer, the applicant shall be required to comply with the provisions of K.S.A. 8-143, and amendments thereto, and return the license plate to the county treasurer of such person's residence.

(g) The Friends of the Topeka Zoo, Inc. shall provide to all county treasurers an electronic mail address where applicants can contact the Friends of the Topeka Zoo, Inc. for information concerning the application process or the status of such applicant's license plate application.

(h) The Friends of the Topeka Zoo, Inc., with the approval of the director of vehicles, shall design a plate to be issued under the provisions of this section.

(i) As a condition of receiving the Topeka Zoo license plate and any subsequent registration renewal of such license plate, the applicant shall consent to the division authorizing the division's release of motor vehicle record information, including the applicant's name, address, royalty payment amount, plate number and vehicle type, to the Friends of the Topeka Zoo, Inc. and the state treasurer.

(j) The collection and remittance of annual royalty payments by the county treasurer shall be subject to the provisions of K.S.A. 8-1,141(h), and amendments thereto.

Sec. 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the statute book.