

**Testimony in Favor of the Stadium STAR Bonds Proposal
By Julie Roller Weeks, Director, Visit Abilene
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On behalf of the Travel Industry Association of Kansas (TIAK), a unified voice speaking on behalf of the travel industry in the State of Kansas, I am pleased to offer our support for using STAR Bonds to recruit a professional sports franchise to Kansas. Our organization has more than 150 members representing and promoting communities across Kansas to increase visitation, economic development and spending in our state.

The travel sector is an integral part of the Kansas economy, generating a total economic impact of \$12.5 billion in 2022, including indirect and induced impacts. This impact sustained over 88,000 jobs and generated \$777 million in state and local tax revenue. To put this in perspective, tourism is one of the top contributors to our state's economy, rivaling other major industries.

Many Kansas communities, large and small, rural and urban, have benefited from the STAR Bond program by developing new attractions that draw additional visitors and spending. Projects such as the Kansas Speedway in Kansas City, the Flint Hills Discovery Center in Manhattan, and the Boot Hill Museum in Dodge City are all examples of successful destination tourism attractions. For instance, the Kansas Speedway has not only brought exciting NASCAR events to the state but has also spurred the development of surrounding retail and entertainment districts, creating numerous jobs and significantly boosting local revenues.

By utilizing STAR Bonds to recruit a professional sports franchise, we can attract additional visitors and spending to Kansas. The new facility would position Kansas to capitalize on hosting additional events, such as major sporting events and concerts, thereby generating revenue that would otherwise be inaccessible. This would further solidify Kansas's reputation as a premier destination for both tourists and sports enthusiasts.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of this bill. I urge you to consider this project's long-term benefits and transformative potential for our state. Let's seize this game-changing opportunity to make Kansas a top-tier destination for professional sports and beyond.