



THE CHAMBER
WICHITA REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

February 17, 2017

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Wichita Regional Chamber and our 1,600 members employing nearly 150,00 Kansans, thank you for the opportunity to offer written testimony in support of H.B 2184; an Act re-authorizing STAR Bonds.

The Chamber strongly supports keeping this valuable economic development tool in place. Without question, The STAR Bonds program has been successful in creating billions of dollars in capital investment and resulted in thousands of new jobs in the state of Kansas.

The citizens of Wichita and south central Kansas have and are currently benefiting from current STAR Bonds districts. Major investment has been made in our region and new and exciting developments are in the works, as well. It is an understatement to say that our region is a different and better place both in terms of investment, jobs and quality of life because of STAR Bonds.

As is the case with any program or incentive, it is appropriate to review the rules and regulations from time to time to ensure that public policy goals are being met and that taxpayers are receiving the maximum level of protection and benefit. We support such reviews, but caution the Legislature not to make substantive changes that would imperil the successes of the program.

We also understand and appreciate the challenges presented by the current budget environment. However, efforts seeking to end or suspend valuable economic development tools such as HPIP, PEAK and/or STAR Bonds are misguided and dangerous. The state cannot cease efforts to expand our economy. Doing so will only prolong the challenges we face today by taking us backwards in terms of capital investment and job creation,

Therefore, we strongly urge you to reauthorize STAR Bonds and protect programs like HPIP and PEAK.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason P. Watkins".

Jason Watkins