



Pittsburg State University

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT AND TAXATION

**Testimony in Support of
Senate Bills 125 and 135**

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Pittsburg State University

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Chair Tyson and esteemed members of the Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation:

Pittsburg State University strongly supports reauthorization and extension of the Rural Opportunity Zone (ROZ) program under SB125 and expansion of the program scope to include Crawford County under SB135.

Economic Growth, Workforce Growth, Enrollment Growth, and Shared Prosperity

As the only county in Southeast Kansas (SEK) not currently included in the ROZ program, reauthorization and expansion of the program would provide a new and important tool to support our strategic and coordinated efforts to grow the workforce, the economy, and our enrollment. These outcomes are intrinsically and synergistically linked for the continued expansion of opportunity and prosperity in Pittsburg, Crawford County, and throughout SEK.

For nearly a decade, Pittsburg State University, the City of Pittsburg, and Crawford County have deepened strategic partnerships with numerous examples of shared interaction and engagement in the local and regional economy. Pittsburg State University has fully embraced its role in advancing economic development and growth, not as a secondary or tertiary impact of our operations but through strategic planning and partnerships as well as intentional economic engagement an intervention strategy. Highlights of this new era and shared approach to economic development include the Plaster Center, Block22, deep involvement in the Imagine Pittsburg 2030 strategic planning effort, and development of an innovative partnership approach to economic development (*PSU, along with the Pittsburg Area Chamber of Commerce, contractually partner with the City of Pittsburg to lead and coordinate economic development*).

This unique and innovative strategic partnership approach to economic development has borne significant fruit for the Pittsburg Micropolitan Area, with nearly every major indicator of economic health over the past several years outpacing national and statewide averages. We believe Pittsburg and Crawford County to be on the precipice of significant economic growth and prosperity with workforce growth and development being one of the last remaining hurdles to that potentially explosive growth. Passage of SB125 and SB135 would provide an important tool in our efforts to attract and retain the workforce necessary to support our strategic plans and our current momentum.