



**Testimony to House Committee on Commerce
Support of HB2196
February 09, 2021
The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce**

The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce (KC Chamber), its Board of Directors and its approximately 2,000 members (40% of which are on the Kansas side), supports HB2196 that overhauls Kansas' unemployment insurance system. The KC Chamber supports policies that ensure a strong and stable business climate and also supports assurance that the unemployment insurance trust fund is solvent for future use and emergencies as we saw in the case of the pandemic. The Chamber also supports steps that government can take to modernize systems and modernize operations to improve interactions between the business community and citizens, alike.

The KC Chamber supports various provisions and concepts that are provided for in HB2196. First, the Chamber supports the concept of the Unemployment Compensation Modernization and Improvement Council that allows the business community to have a voice at the table to address issues with the unemployment system in Kansas to ensure a responsive and efficient unemployment compensation system for the state. The KC Chamber is also pleased to see the bill develop and upgrade the Department of Labor's IT systems. We are encouraged to see special interest placed on the development of new web portals to share information and data that will allow for more transparent and responsive government services. The KC Chamber also supports provisions that change the way fraudulent claims are handled. We are encouraged to see the intent of the legislature to not penalize businesses for fraudulent claims filed against employers. The Chamber is also eager to see a fairer rate scale that employers pay for the unemployment insurance trust fund.

Perhaps one of the more appealing parts of the bill for the KC Chamber's perspective is the expansion of the Work Share program in the state. During the height of the pandemic-induced business closures, many folks and businesses learned about the Work Share program in the state. The KC Chamber likes the idea of expanding eligibility for the program for both employers and employees, but also supports the promotional plan for the program. The more businesses can keep folks employed without having to undergo furloughs or layoffs-even if temporary-the more the economy can stay healthy.

The KC Chamber supports HB2196 to ensure stability and certainty in the business climate and to ensure solvency for the state's unemployment insurance trust fund. The KC Chamber is also encouraged to see the legislature look earnestly at modernizing and updating the system's IT systems to ensure government is responsive and modernized to fit the needs of a 21st Century economy.

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