



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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February 16, 2021

Carolyn McGinn, Chair
Senate Local Government Committee
State Capitol, Room 142-S
Topeka, KS 66612

Re: Oral Testimony in Support of SCR 1606
Greg McKinley, Riley County Commission Vice Chairman

Dear Chair McGinn and Members of the Committee:

The Board of Riley County Commissioners has introduced SCR 1606.

Home rule is necessary for counties. It allows county commissions to react quickly and effectively to local events and conditions. For example, the extreme cold affecting Kansas in the past week has disrupted some portion of the COVID-19 testing taking place in Riley County. Riley County had made available one of its outdoor facilities (normally used during the county fair) as a testing site. The private company providing this testing is under a contract with the State of Kansas. But the cold weather has made it impossible for the company's staff to continue their work outdoors. It is important such testing continue. Good data helps the Riley County Health Department accurately determine the rate of COVID-19 infections in our community. Knowing the rate of infection helps our local health officer and our Board make health policy decisions which protect our citizens and businesses.

Our County Commission had already leased a building from a local church. We will use that building as an "Alternate Care Site" for COVID-19 patient treatment, if it becomes necessary. During a commission meeting last week, we quickly approved staff's development of an amendment to the existing lease. We took legislative action in that public meeting to authorize our Chairman to sign such an amendment, once it's prepared, without waiting for our next regular public meeting. If that amendment is acceptable to the owner, the testing company and this Board, our hope is to have free and warm indoor space available to the company this week. Then testing will continue.

This kind of quick response by our Board to a local problem is possible because we have lawful authority to take quick legislative action and alter our existing contract. Home rule gives Riley County that authority.

SCR 1606 protects existing Riley County home rule. It gives constitutional protection to our ability to solve local problems, at the local level.

Thank you for allowing our Board to ask your support of SCR 1606.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg McKinley", is written over a horizontal line.

Greg McKinley, Vice Chairman
Board of Riley County Commissioners