

To: House Committee on Financial Institutions and Rural Revitalization
From: Wendi Stark, Research Associate
Date: March 17, 2021
RE: Proponent for HB 2431

Thank you to Chairman Kelly and the members of the committee for giving the League of Kansas Municipalities the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2431.

This bill would extend the Rural Opportunity Zone (ROZ) program to include community improvement project, such as parks, main street beautification, or community centers. In addition, this bill would provide appropriations for construction or renovation of housing units. Finally, the ROZ program would continue to provide appropriations current ROZ program initiatives including tax income credits, assistance for student loans repayments of up to \$15,000, and assistance of up to 1.5% of the down payment for the purchase of a housing unit for five years.

The League provides support and advocacy for the 625 cities in Kansas. Several communities, ranging from WaKeeney to Beloit, have shared their experiences from using the ROZ program. The income tax waiver, student loan repayment, and employer sponsored portions have been components of the current ROZ program that cities have found beneficial for recruitment and retention in their communities.

The ROZ program has benefitted many communities throughout the state, and we appreciate the benefits to cities in Kansas. The League supports HB 2431 and respectfully ask the committee to recommend the bill as amended favorably to the full House for its consideration.