

CITY OF OSAWATOMIE

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L. Mark Govea, Mayor

2021 Session -- HB 2431

Submitted by: Michael Scanlon, City Manager, City of Osawatomie

To: House Financial Institutions and Rural Development

The Rural Opportunity Zone was initially introduced to help targeted counties that had experienced double digit population loss. Since that time, it has been expanded to include more than half of Kansas' counties. Because Miami County's demographics are very similar to other designed counties, repeated requests have been made for inclusion. Each of those efforts failed.

As proposed, HB 2431 provides an established threshold based on population size with annual certifications based on updated population estimates. **As a community within Miami County, we would request that the proposed cap of 35,000 be increased to 40,000.** Using current estimates, the change would allow two additional counties, Crawford and Finney, to participate in the program. It would also grant additional time for Miami, Harvey and Cowley counties to each participate before growing out of the program. At this time, all three of those counties are within 1,000 persons of that cap. Ford and Lyon counties are within 2,000 people of the cap.

Alongside our development partners at Miami County, the City of Osawatomie is excited about the possibility of participating in the revamped program particularly with the new emphasis on housing, which is a large part of our upcoming comprehensive and strategic plan updates. We believe the program offers another tool for our community as we strive to recover from the economic hardships created during the pandemic.

We appreciate your consideration.