



March 23, 2021

To: Chairman Smith and members of the House Taxation Committee  
From: Jessica Lucas, President – Friends of Cedar Crest Association  
RE: FoCCA and SB 71

Thank you for the opportunity to visit with you today about the Friends of Cedar Crest Association. In 1928, Topeka newspaper publisher, Frank P. MacLennan, took a visionary step and began constructing a French country chateau on a wooded hilltop west of Topeka. The home was designed by the Wight and Wight architectural firm in Kansas City and cost \$60,000 to construct.

He completed his country retreat, named Cedar Crest, and moved his collection of 1500 books in the home before his death in 1933. Many of those books remain in the home's library today.

His widow, Madge Overstreet MacLennan, watched our state capital grow west toward her beloved retreat over the next twenty years. Upon her death in 1955, she acted upon her husband's request and bequeathed Cedar Crest to the State of Kansas, with the condition it be utilized as a home for the Governor. The state's gift also included MacLennan's collection of books and 244 acres of surrounding land, with the provision the land be designated as a park.

At the time, a home known as the Erasmus Bennett house at 8<sup>th</sup> and Buchanan served as the governor's residence, but the home was not well maintained. In 1960 the south portico collapsed in a heavy snowstorm. The failing condition of the Bennett house coincided with the generous gift by Madge MacLennan, and the legislature accepted the home, acreage, and books in 1957. However, it wasn't until 1962 that Governor John Anderson and his family moved to Cedar Crest.

When Governor Kelly and her husband moved into Cedar Crest in January 2019, they became the 13<sup>th</sup> First Family to occupy the residence. Cedar Crest stands unique among our nations' Governors' residences. The three-story home is the smallest Governor's residence in the United States but includes the most land area of any executive residence. In 1982, it was officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

It was during the Carlin administration that the Friends of Cedar Crest Association was founded. Our mission states we exist to cooperate with the First Family and the Governor's Residence Advisory Commission to preserve, restore and enhance Cedar Crest, and encourage public awareness of and contribution to the historical and cultural importance of Cedar Crest.

During the Graves administration, the home underwent a major 18-month renovation that was completed in 2000. Through a unique partnership between the State of Kansas and the Friends of Cedar Crest Association, the \$4.4 million-dollar renovation was made possible. The State of Kansas appropriated \$2.2 million to replace failing plumbing, electrical, and heating systems at Cedar Crest

and abate hazardous materials throughout the 71-year old home. With the help of First Lady Linda Graves, our organization raised \$2.2 million in private funds to match the state's appropriation.

Those dollars allowed for remodeling bathrooms and kitchens, replacing worn furnishings, and restoring the home's historical elements.

While the State of Kansas remains responsible for Cedar Crest's maintenance, the FoCCA remains a private partner to help ensure this special home remains unique, restored, and refreshed. Our board is firmly committed to the cause. And we certainly have work to do.

The last major renovation to Cedar Crest was completed in 2000. Since that time, there have been some furnishing and drapes changes and the replacement of worn blinds. At the beginning of Governor Kelly's term, the Association paid to update the two guest bedrooms upstairs and purchased lamps and Kansas-produced art for the hallway. But essentially, the furnishings and rugs purchased in 2000 remain in the home today.

There are many necessary updates that need to happen throughout the house, but most notably on the first floor.

We've also engaged with Secretary Burns-Wallace, her staff at the Department of Administration, and the Kansas Historical Society through the Residence Advisory Commission to establish more clear guidelines around the state's roles and responsibilities and our organization.

When the renovation was completed in 2000, there wasn't much work that had to be done. But now we're 20 years out from that, and six different Governors have resided in the home. As you'd expect, the wear and tear are showing. The furniture is now an eclectic mix throughout the house as different families have moved things around and used them in various ways.

***In order to better serve Cedar Crest for the future, I respectfully request an amendment to SB 71 to include the Friends of Cedar Crest Association under the same terms afforded the Eisenhower Foundation. The dollars available to FoCCA through this tax credit would be used largely to establish an endowment that will serve the organization far into the future. In the near term, we would also use some of the funds for the first floor updates that are desperately needed.***

I appreciate your consideration of our inclusion in this bill.