

SENATE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

Senator Rick Billinger, Chair

Testimony on HB 2021 (As Amended)

Gregg Burden, Director

Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office

March 25, 2021

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to brief the Ways and Means Committee. I am Gregg Burden, Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office.

The Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office (KCVAO) is privileged to support the nearly 200,000 veterans who live in the State of Kansas. Our mission is to serve Kansas veterans, survivors, and their dependents with dignity and compassion. The KCVAO is a principal advocate in ensuring that they receive information, advice, direction, and assistance through the coordination of programs and services on state and federal benefits: medical care, benefits, social support, and lasting memorials in recognition of their service to Kansas and the nation.

The KCVAO supports House Bill 2021(as amended) concerning the financing of the capital improvement project relating to construction of a state veterans home facility. As the Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs Office I'm excited about the momentum that is building towards potential construction of a new Veterans Home in NE Kansas. Since becoming the Director of this agency over nine years ago the most asked question and request from Veterans and Veterans Service Organizations is "can we build a new Veterans Home in NE Kansas" to support the region with the state's largest veteran population. My hope is that as this momentum continues to gain traction, we can provide accurate information and data, bring the right people and organizations together, and lead the process which will conclude with construction of a new Veterans Home.

The VA provides competitive grants to states to construct new homes or expand, remodel, or alter current homes. The grants provide up to a 65% of total project costs and require at least a 35% state match for top priority groups. If a state applies for a State Veterans Home grant with full match, the soonest a project could be completed is about 5 years, with many projects taking longer due to limited federal funding. The Department of Veterans Affairs provides a comprehensive guide to participate in the State Veterans Home Construction Grant Program. This is a four-part process that includes: Initial Pre-Application Phase, Application Phase, Conditional Request letter, and Post Grant Award.

On behalf of the KCVAO, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to brief the committee and for your support. I look forward to working with the Ways and Means Committee and other parties as we move forward working together helping veterans and their dependents. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregg A. Burden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "B".

Gregg Burden

Director

Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs Office