

Mary Patterson, Ph.D.
2219 Troup Ave.
Kansas City, KS 66104

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Kansas House Federal and State Affairs Committee

Dear Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mary Patterson, and I ask for your support to pass HB 2208. I teach Chemistry and Biology as a profession at a local community college. I grew up in Prairie Village not far from the Shawnee Indian Mission. Everything around us was named after the Mission: Mission Rd., Johnson County, Shawnee Mission, even my High School Shawnee Mission East. Yet, growing up I knew so little about the Shawnee Tribe or the children that went to school at the Mission.

I remember as a little girl visiting the Mission Museum and seeing photos of little Indigenous children, their hair cut short and wearing western clothing. Historically, the purpose of these schools was to assimilate the Native American into western culture, while erasing their own Indigenous culture. I just remember being told that was a good thing, that the Shawnee Indian Mission was “helping” these children.

We know very little about those children. We don’t know if any of them are buried at the Mission because no one has searched for them. We don’t know whether they were truly “helped”, or what communication was like between the children and their parents, or why they were not living with their parents. In talking with people I know, I actually can’t find anyone who has visited the Shawnee Indian Mission. A quick look inside the big house shows a building in disarray and in need of updates. I don’t know of any schools that have field trips there, or any educational outreach.

I feel it is time for the Shawnee Tribe to take ownership of the Mission, for it is their story that is to be told there. It is their ancestors who attended the manual labor school there, and they should be given the opportunity to repair the buildings and search the grounds for the children that might have died there because the story of the Mission belongs to those children. It is time for their story to be told.

Sincerely,

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