

**Proponent Written Testimony  
for HB 2331  
Creating Lehigh Portland State Park  
(Last Names M-W)**

<b>Table of Contents</b>		
<b>First Name:</b>	<b>Last Name:</b>	<b>Organization:</b>
Bruce	Moses	Allen Community College
Doug	Palen	NCK Outdoors
Marci	Penner	Kansas Sampler Foundation
Traci	Plumlee	Citizen
Megan	Pridmore	Citizen
Darrell	Pulliam	Pittsburg State University
Randy	Rasa	Citizen
Lisse	Regehr	Citizen
Mary Ann	Regehr	Citizen
Walter	Regehr	Citizen
Annette	Rexwinkle	Citizen
Brett	Rinehart	Citizen
Lary	Robinson	Citizen
WenDee	Rowe	Citizen
Ryan	Sparks	Citizen
Declan	Springer	Citizen
Job	Springer	Citizen
Moira	Springer	Citizen
Tricia	Stogsdill	Citizen
Lori	Stone	Citizen
Bruce	Symes	Citizen
Jenny	Tatman	Citizen
Julie	Turnipseed	Anderson County Development Agency
Erik	Unruh	Citizen
Maria Zielinski	Unruh	Citizen
Curtis (& Amy)	Utley	Citizen
Alan	Weber	Citizen
Chris (& Elizabeth)	Wehlage	Citizen
Jon	Wells	Citizen
Jason	Wesco	Community Health Center of SE Kansas
Elizabeth	Wilcox	Citizen
Bobbi	Williams	Citizen
Brian	Wolfe	Citizen
Dakota	Wynn	Citizen

March 20, 2023

Senator. Renee Erickson, Chairman  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10th St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee of Commerce,

I, Dr. Bruce Moses, President of Allen Community College, am writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Allen County is fortunate to have access to both the Lehigh Portland and the Southwind Rail Trails. Allen Community College employees over 100 full-time faculty and staff on the lola campus and is the home to more than 400 visiting students each year. Access to these resources, including a connecting trail on our campus, allows for recreation and exercise for our stakeholders.

Since the inception of the trails, our athletic teams have utilized them on a regular basis for training. Included with this letter are pictures taken of our cross-country teams on the Lehigh Portland Trails. These trails allow for a safe place for our student athletes and coaches to train all year long and are often used as a recruitment tool for both students and employees.

Lehigh Portland trails also provide a living laboratory for our classes. Students in environmental science can take water samples from the lake or students in photography can learn to take photographs of nature. Allen Community College students can bike or walk to Lehigh Portland for a quiet place to read or just relax.

Please know that Allen Community College is in full support of designating Lehigh Portland a State Park. It will not only be a positive addition to Allen County, but a great place for all Kansans to visit.

Sincerely,



Dr. Bruce Moses President  
Allen Community College

Resident of Allen County

Enc. Photos from the college



Allen Community College Women's Cross Country team training at Lehigh.



Allen Community College Men's Cross Country team training at Lehigh.





1031 180 Rd | Glen Elder, KS 67446

[www.nckoutdoors.com](http://www.nckoutdoors.com)

March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

Please allow me to introduce myself. I'm Doug Palen, and I'm writing in support of HB 2331 on behalf of NCK Outdoors. NCK Outdoors is a not-for-profit organization founded to inspire and support the development of local trails, active outdoor programs and events to get our youth, families and communities outdoors in Kansas. One of the programs my organization supports is our local youth mountain bike team, the NCK Raptors. Additionally, NCK Outdoors is actively working on several community trail development projects in North Central Kansas.

A broad goal underlying all the NCK Outdoors trail projects is to serve as a model for expanding trail access in other communities across Kansas. This commitment to improving trail access for all Kansans motivated the NCK Outdoors board to support passage of HB 2331 creating the Lehigh Portland State Park in Allen County. This legislation is an opportunity for Kansas to add a unique outdoor recreation venue with an existing trail network to our state park system. Trails and outdoor recreation facilities encourage healthy lifestyles in addition to generating economic benefits for local communities and the state of Kansas. NCK Outdoors requests that the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee act favorably on this bill.

If you want to learn more about the activities of NCK Outdoors, please call me at 785-545-8505. I'd be happy to arrange a time to meet with you or even to set up a tour of our trail projects.

Thank you in advance for supporting passage of HB2331.

Sincerely,

Doug Palen



March 20, 2023

Dear Senator Erickson and the Committee on Commerce,

Thank you for your consideration about creating another trail state park with the Lehigh Portland Trail.

With each added state park trail system, we push Kansas forward into becoming known as a trail state. Not only is this a message to recreation enthusiasts but also for those choosing whether or not to live in Kansas. When the state shows interest and support for recreational options, this sends a strong message to the young audience we are seeking to retain or attract in Kansas.

This investment by the state for trail state parks has led to private economic enhancements like bike shops, coffee shops, microbreweries, Air BnB's, and restaurants. These businesses change the vibe of a community. These communities change the way Kansas is viewed.

I've biked the Lehigh Portland Trail and enjoyed it so very much. If this trail would become a state park, it would be a positive imagemaker for southeast Kansas and help all who use the trail see the unique characteristics of this region.

Additionally, when the legislature and administration support trail systems it sends a message to opponents of rail trails through agricultural areas. With philanthropic support, there is so much potential for developing trails in every region of the state, which means a path to more economic opportunities for cities in proximity to these trails.

The development of multiple trail state parks is impressive and this committee and all the trail advocates are to be commended.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marci Penner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marci Penner, co-director  
Kansas Sampler Foundation

March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10th St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

I am writing to express my support for HB 2331, designating Lehigh Portland as a Kansas state park.

I was born and raised in Iola. Growing up, my father was an Iola Elks member and we frequently spent time at the quarry lake swimming, fishing, and boating. After living in the KC metro area for nearly two decades, I returned to Iola with my husband to raise our family in my hometown.

As Elks members, our family has continued to enjoy the quarry lake area, which has been significantly enhanced by the addition of the surrounding trail system. We hike, bike, kayak, canoe, swim, and fish - and we do it together. Having nearby access to outdoor amenities means that we participate and are active more often - and the time spent as a family and with friends has immeasurable value.

I was not upset when I learned that the Elks' lease on the lake was not renewed - I knew something bigger was in store - and I was excited to learn of the possibility of a state park.

Designating the quarry lake and surrounding trail system as a state park would not only give other families the opportunity to enjoy lake recreation as my family has, but it would attract visitors to the area, make Allen County a destination for outdoor recreation events and festivals, and benefit our local economy.

A partnership with the state is important to help improve safety measures for the area. With more people accessing the quarry lake and surrounding trails, added support from the state would lend the expertise and resources needed to properly maintain and monitor the public green space, helping to ensure that everyone has a safe experience so that these resources can continue to be enjoyed for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,



Traci Plumlee  
Resident of Iola, Kansas

March 19, 2023

Senator Renee Erickson

Senate Committee on Commerce

Communities in Southeast Kansas are struggling for new ways to introduce activities for people to improve their physical and mental health, bring new tourism dollars into their cities and encourage educational opportunities using the outdoors as classrooms. I fully support HB2331.

I was raised in Southeast Kansas, and I personally have hiked, biked, and enjoyed this trail with friends, family and my own children.

Thinking outside the box and using Kansas as more of a destination for various outdoor activities will help small towns and large ones continue to survive and thrive.

Megan Pridmore

2620 W Post Oak Rd, Olathe, KS 66061





**Pittsburg State University**  
Kansas Polymer Research Center

Tyler Research Center  
1204 Research Road  
Pittsburg, KS 66762  
620-235-6120

March 17, 2023  
Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

My name is Darrell Pulliam, and I am employed by Pittsburg State University, a founding member of the Prairie Pathways multi-county bike route, local business owner, previous professional BMX cyclist, and lifelong cycling advocate. I am writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Throughout my life I have had the opportunity to ride trails, roads, and single-track trails in over 40 states. I have found the trail systems in Iola, specifically the Lehigh Portland Trails, are comparable to some of the best trail systems in the country. I visit often, and each time I visit, I see cyclists from outside the region and state. This place has organically become a tourist destination.

Studies show that individuals will ride their bikes to places they consider a destination. This is true in my case, as I have occasionally ridden from Pittsburg Kansas to Iola and spent the night enjoying outdoor recreation. The scenery and backdrop of the trail is remarkable and absolutely an asset to capitalize on.

In addition to tourism potential, trails are an amenity that enhance quality of life and encourage economic growth by building business friendly environments. Much of the workforce we are targeting to recruit, or to stay, require such readily available access to outdoor recreation activities.

A healthy community is the foundation to a thriving economy. The Prairie Pathways Bike Route connects three counties in Southeast Kansas: Allen, Bourbon, and Crawford. We are actively working and collaborating as a region to address disparities, health inequities, and the social determinants of health so we can all benefit from a rise in population, property valuations, health outcomes, and more.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to the future Lehigh Portland State Park and all the opportunities it provides for those regardless of socio-economic status, background, or ability.

Sincerely,  
Darrell Pulliam  
Resident of Crawford County

2023-03-17

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

I am writing to express my support for Lehigh Portland State Park (HB 2331).

I am a board member with Thrive Allen County, and was one of the first volunteers to work on the project that became the Lehigh Portland Trails. Since 2014, I have contributed over 5600 volunteer hours in trail-building, trail stewardship, habitat restoration and management, planning, promotion, and administration.

I am proud to be part of the team that has built one of the finest trail systems in Kansas, and it has been extremely gratifying to see how many people enjoy Lehigh for mountain biking, trail running, nature hikes, bird watching, wildflower viewing, fossil hunting, and citizen science. The trail system, lake, and diverse natural environment is a showcase of the best of Southeast Kansas outdoors.

Allen County has, at this point in time, relatively little public land. Allen County has no state fishing lakes, no wildlife areas, no state parks (other than the Prairie Spirit Trail), no federal reservoirs, no federal wildlife refuges, no National Parks, no Corps of Engineer lands, and no county lakes or parks. The Lehigh Portland State Park would help to remedy that deficiency, and provide direct benefit to Allen County and the State of Kansas.

I enthusiastically support HB 2331, designating Lehigh Portland State Park, and I ask for your support.

Sincerely,

Randy Rasa  
Board Member, Thrive Allen County, Iola Kansas

# THRIVE ALLEN COUNTY

March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

My name is Lisse Regehr and I am writing today to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park. I moved back home to Iola, Kansas in October 2014 after living in Minnesota for a decade. I moved home because there was so much happening to make our community a better place. I was unexpectedly surprised to see one of the biggest areas of progress was in the creation of trails and recreational areas. In a community where it's difficult to walk safely because we have few sidewalks, having access to beautiful public spaces that allow for safe walking and biking is so important. I was able to move home because I received a job at Thrive Allen County, who was leading the efforts in creating a healthier, growing, vibrant community. I have been proud and honored to be part of the efforts through my work at Thrive. This includes being a part of the volunteer group that created the Lehigh Portland Trail system. When I first started at Thrive, the Lehigh Portland Trail creation was just underway. There were no limestone screenings laid, there were just pathways cut through most of the area where we wanted to see the trails crisscross the property. To go from that to what Lehigh is today was an amazing undertaking that so many volunteers in our community took on, because they valued what this would mean to our community.

Even before the Lehigh Portland Trails were complete in 2016, we were already able to show their promise to people we were recruiting into town. In February of 2015, one of our health clinics was creating a dentist to Iola. We were able to take him, his wife and their three children to Lehigh, even though it was unfinished and show them what it would be. The wife exclaimed that she never thought she could feel like she was in Colorado (where she is originally from) while in Kansas. She wanted to move to a place where she could work on becoming healthier. The beauty of Lehigh and the promise of a trail system she could utilize was one of the main reasons they picked our community to live. And they are still here today. Since 2016 when the Lehigh Portland trail system became open to the public, it has become our community's number one recruitment tool. Every professional candidate we are asked to tour around our community is taken to Lehigh. And every one of them is astonished at what they find. We were able to attract three doctors to town in the space of a 3 month period of time recently, and this amenity was one of the biggest reasons why. Our cross country coach at Allen Community College has credited Lehigh for winning Nationals. He has told us as soon as his recruits visit Lehigh, they tell him

**9 S. Jefferson Avenue | Iola, KS 66749 | 620-365-8128 | [info@thriveallencounty.org](mailto:info@thriveallencounty.org)**



they are ready to sign because they know they won't find a better training area. In fact, this area is used by multiple high school cross country teams and college teams.

Lehigh is also a wonderful spot to take children for educational activities. The local elementary and preschools utilize Lehigh Portland for field trips to allow for science and nature activities. Thrive created an education area on the Eastern Trailhead to assist teachers as they bring their students to the trails. In the summer, the science camp at Allen Community College utilizes Lehigh for exploring and further education. It has been mentioned that visiting Lehigh is much better than putting our kids on buses to go hours on a field trip to the city. It was so much easier and interesting to explore what our community has to offer in our own backyard: fossils, caves, birds, snakes, deer, fish, trails, flowers, and so many plant species.

Lehigh has become the gem of our community and we are very proud of that fact. We have had businesses open in Allen County because they see the value the trails have to offer. Local business owners are very excited about the opportunity to open the entire property to the public, meaning more people will be visiting our community: eating in our restaurants, shopping in our stores, staying in our airbnbs and hotels. Both Iola and Humboldt have seen growth over the past couple of years in regard to new small businesses. The creation of Lehigh Portland State Park will provide stability and growth for years to come as visitors stop into our towns as they visit Lehigh.

Lehigh Portland Trails have been credited for providing people a safe and beautiful space to become healthier and more active. We have many community members who have used Lehigh as part of their daily routine, ensuring they are walking, biking or running to stay healthy. They also use it for better mental and emotional health. Spending more time in nature allows for our residents to decompress. Studies show that time in nature allow for better overall health outcomes. During the height of the COVID pandemic we saw a massive surge in parks and recreational area usages. American Trails noted usage of outdoor space was up 79% between March and July of 2022, showing a need for these spaces, especially in rural communities where they are often lacking.

More than anything, this gift given by Iola Industries to the State of Kansas is about preserving our rural way of life. Rural communities in Kansas are on the decline. On average we are losing population and businesses. Allen County is no different, but we are working to turn this . In 2017, Allen County won the Robert Wood Johnson Culture of Health Prize—to date we are the only Kansas community to receive this honor—and it wasn't because we were the healthiest community—far from it—but because we are scrappy, resourceful and collaborate to ensure we create opportunities and knock down barriers. The gift of Lehigh Portland to create a state park is one of those opportunities. In a day and age where many people can work remotely, how do rural communities become a place those workers want to live? How do we ensure awe inspiring environments like Lehigh are open and available to the public for generations to come?

Kansas ranks 49<sup>th</sup> in the nation for access to public lands. As our urban areas grow, we want to ensure that safe havens and respites like Lehigh Portland are accessible to Kansans and others wanting to

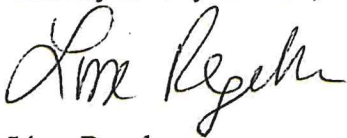


discover our beautiful landscapes. Missouri, Oklahoma and Arkansas are in Southeast Kansas' backyard. Instead of losing tourism and dollars to these states, we can instead attract those people into Kansas with this beautiful asset located within 30 minutes of Missouri, one hour from Oklahoma, and 2.5 hours from Arkansas. We want to show our neighbors why we are so proud to be Kansans and all the beauty our state has to hold.

One of the unique opportunities with the Lehigh property is the collaboration Thrive Allen County would have with KDWP in the resources and funding areas. Thrive is a very well established grant writing organization. In the past two years alone, we have brought more than \$7 million into local government and nonprofit entities in Allen County. This is not funding that came to Thrive—we wrote our own grants as well—but instead funding that was written for the express intent of other entities in our community. As Lehigh is currently privately owned, there are few grant funding opportunities for the area, but when it becomes publicly owned, that all changes, and Thrive is excited to partner with KDWP to ensure Lehigh has abundant resources for its growth and sustainability. Thrive also currently has two team members whose sole jobs are bikes and trails. Over the past couple of years, their work has been very specific to Lehigh. We plan to continue to work with KDWP, as long as they would like our assistance. Our team already has a cadre of volunteers to work on Lehigh. Those volunteers have made Lehigh into what it is today, and they want to continue to partner with KDWP to ensure its growth and sustainability in the future.

The creation of Lehigh Portland State Park would be a game changer for Allen County, Southeast Kansas, and the State of Kansas. It holds boundless opportunities for exploration, recreation, adventure and education. I truly believe Lehigh Portland will be one of the top assets in the state of Kansas' Wildlife and Parks portfolio. I am an enthusiastic supporter of HB2331!

Thank you for your time,

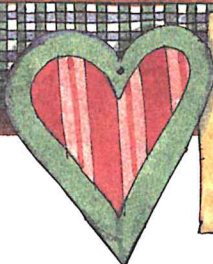


Lisse Regehr  
President and CEO, Thrive Allen County  
Iola Industries Board Member  
Resident of Allen County

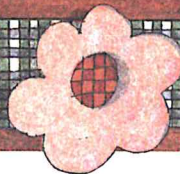




A B C



I



2

17 March 2023

Senator Renee Erickson, Chairwoman  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St  
Topeka, KS 66617

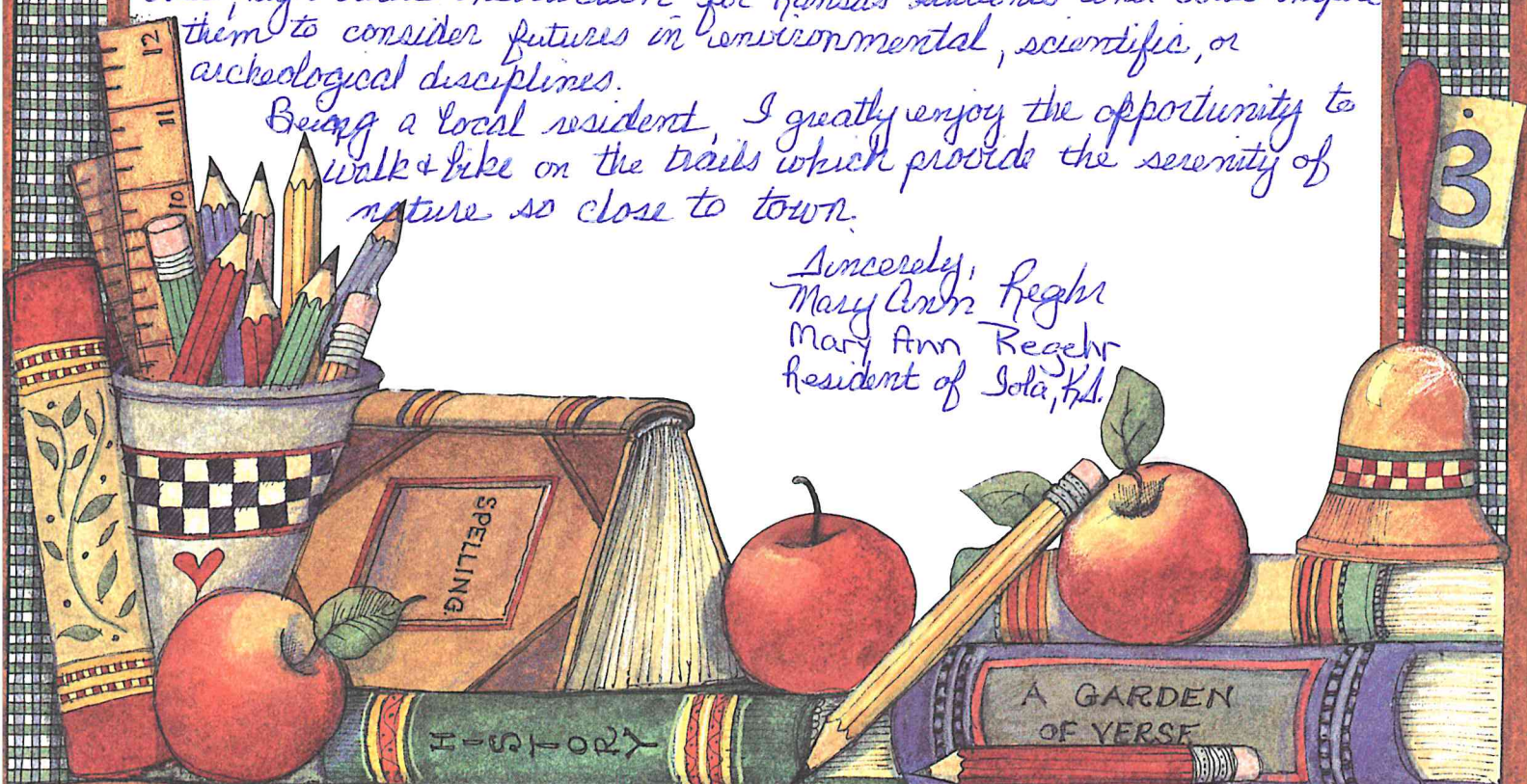
Dear Chairwoman Erickson & Members of the Senate Commerce Committee,

I, Mary Ann Regehr, am writing to express my support for HB 2331, creating Seligh Portland State Park.

As a teacher, we took the entire Iola fourth grade class on a field trip to the natural surface trails area. The students had the opportunity to study science by observing a cave, rock formations and local plant and animal life. They learned local history observing artifacts of early settlers in the area. It was felt by all the teachers that this area could be easily used to develop great planned field trips that would enhance all levels of school curricula, making learning more meaningful. Four different school districts are 20 minutes or less from this site. Many more are less than an hour away. The park would provide low cost, high value instruction for Kansas students and could inspire them to consider futures in environmental, scientific, or archeological disciplines.

Being a local resident, I greatly enjoy the opportunity to walk & bike on the trails which provide the serenity of nature so close to town.

Sincerely,  
Mary Ann Regehr  
Mary Ann Regehr  
resident of Iola, KS.



3



March 17, 2023

Sen Renee Erickson, Chair

Senate Committee on Commerce

Kansas State Capitol

300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.

Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce

I Walter Regehr, Jr, am writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

I have experienced the trails and helped in different activities on the property in question. Including it in the state park system would be a great addition for the State of Kansas and the local area. The trails are wonderful and a great asset to a healthy community. People come from various areas of the country to experience them and the lake would add additional value, beyond monetary, for people of all ages to experience.

I have fond memories of the Lehigh Portland property. Growing up in the area, I knew several employees of the cement plant when it was in operation. Our Peewee and Little League baseball games were accomplished on Lehigh Portland property. Today, the trails on this property are used by more than hikers and bikers. Schools from high school through college use the trails, at times, for cross country practice. Utilizing an environment that can't be created on a city street or running track. These people are creating memories much as I did as a young boy.

Designating the Lehigh Portland as a state park should have positive economic benefit to this area. Monetarily, this could stimulate growth in a variety of local businesses, provide an area for healthy lifestyles, enjoyment of the environment around the lake and educational opportunities. What a positive way to preserve this property for all to enjoy, not only for now but for generations to come.

Sincerely,

  
Walter Regehr, Jr.

Lt. Colonel, USAF (Retired)

Instructor, Economics and Math, Allen Community College (Retired)

Former Allen County Commissioner

Resident of Iola, Kansas

March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman Senate Commerce Committee Kansas State Capitol 300 SW  
10th St. Topeka, Kansas 66612 Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate  
Commerce Committee,

Why is it important Lehigh Portland is designated as a State Park:

- \* Helps to improve the safety infrastructure and maintenance of the property by including park staff
- \* Access to state resources to cultivate a more environmentally sustainable ecosystem for wildlife
- \* Increases quality-of-life improvements, such as bathrooms, water, camping, and other amenities, for local residents and visitors alike
- \* Stimulates regional economic competitiveness and opportunity for businesses
- \* Ensures Allen County residents' tax dollars given to Kansas Wildlife and Parks are invested locally -and creates a destination for all Kansas taxpayers to enjoy
- \* Improves accessibility infrastructure and the community's connection to green space and recreation
- \* Promotes partnership between local and state entities
- Honors local history and creates a legacy for future generations in Iola, Allen County, and Kansas

What Lehigh Portland adds to the Kansas State Park System:

- \* 14.5 miles of wide gravel trails (2.5 miles) and natural surface trails/ singletrack (12+ miles)
- \* Directly connects to Prairie Spirit Trails State Park and Southwind Rail Trail
- \* Roughly 360 acres of diverse landscape, including a 138 acre quarry lake

Sincerely, Annette Rexwinkle resident of Allen County



February 9, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10 th St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

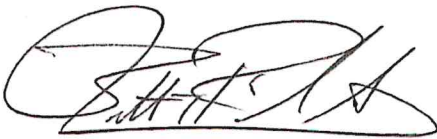
Dear Senator Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

I, Brett Rinehart, am writing to express my support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

I believe that making the Lehigh Portland Trails and lake into a state park would be a great thing not only for lola, but also surrounding towns and communities. I am the head cross country coach at Chanute High School, and we bring our team up to the Lehigh Portland Trails to run several times per season. It provides a great place to run on quality trails and get the kids off the roads, a benefit that I'm sure local runners/walkers/bikers enjoy as well. I also bring my family up to lola on a regular basis to enjoy the trails. Also, being an avid fisherman, it would be nice to have more local options, and the lake would be a perfect one if it becomes open to the public.

This area needs more recreational opportunities for kids and families to enjoy the outdoors. Creating the Lehigh Portland State Park would provide a close-to-home option for lola citizens and the surrounding communities and I think would benefit the are greatly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brett Rinehart", written over a horizontal line.

Brett Rinehart  
Resident of Chanute, Kansas

**Lary A. Robinson, M.D., F.A.C.S.**  
Senior Member, Moffitt Medical Group  
Thoracic Surgical Oncology

March 17, 2023

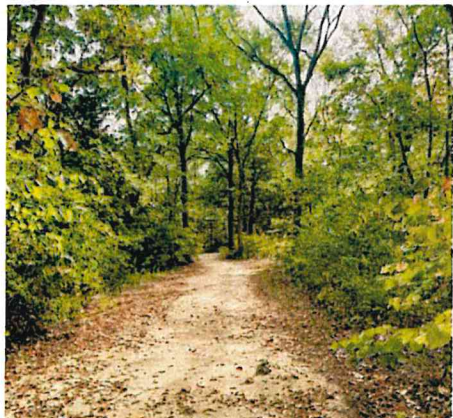
Sen. Renee Erickson  
Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10th St.  
Topeka, Ks. 66612

Phone: 813-745-6635  
Fax: 813-449-8077  
lary.robinson@moffitt.org

RE: Lehigh Portland State Park Bill HB2331

Dear Sen. Erickson:

I was born and raised in lola Kansas, living there for 18 years, and subsequently attending University of Kansas. I currently live in Tampa, Florida but I return to lola at least every 2 years to visit since I still own farmland in Allen County (and pay taxes there). I recall quite well



the time that the Lehigh Portland Cement Plant was operating, and I also remember when it was shut down in the early 70s. However, I was delighted when the abandoned Lehigh Cement Plant property was taken over by lola Industries who renovated the property to become a beautiful and pedestrian-friendly nature park.



Every time I return to lola, I spend at least an entire day walking and running through the park which fortunately directly connects with the Southwind Rail Trail making this area one of the most remarkable recreational locations I have ever visited. These are a few pictures I took at my last visit in October, 2022.



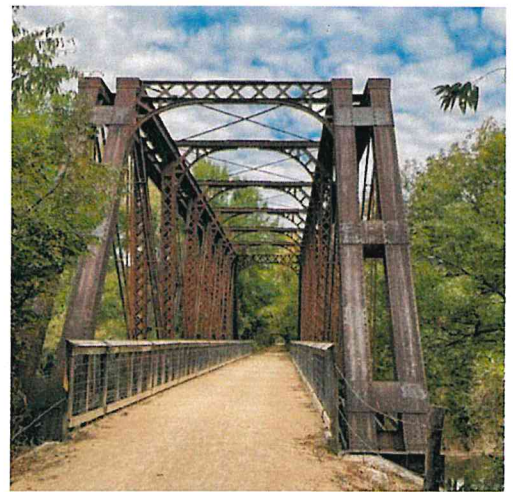
Designating the Lehigh Portland Park as a Kansas State Park is an important step in further development of this family-friendly nature preserve. As a state park, it would greatly benefit the local Allen County community and the State of Florida. Not only would it significantly benefit the local businesses, but also it would promote

outdoor recreation and healthy lifestyles. Although I am not a current Kansas resident, I own 455 acres of Allen County farmland, pay local taxes and am committed to the continued development of this area that a State Park would foster.

I **strongly** recommend that the Kansas Senate approve the pending bill to designate this area as the Lehigh Portland State Park. The cost for this measure is low, but the benefits are great.

Respectfully,

Lary A Robinson, MD  
6412 E. MacLaurin Drive  
Tampa, FL 33647  
[larobins@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:larobins@tampabay.rr.com)





March 20, 2023

Senator Renee Erickson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Sen. Renee Erickson and the Senate Committee on Commerce,

I, WenDee Rowe, am writing to express my support for HB 2231, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Following are a few of the reasons I think are worthy of supporting this bill.

- Kansas is becoming well known as a destination state for outdoor activities. Southeast Kansas in particular is a hidden gem in our state and it's time has come to play a bigger part in attracting visitors to this unique part of Kansas.
- I am an avid gravel cyclist and for my 65th birthday in 2022 I chose to travel to Humboldt, Kansas so I could ride the Southward Rail Trail and the Lehigh Portland Trail. Little did I know the incredible beauty I would encounter when I came around the corner after shortly starting the trail near Lola to see the quarry filled with water, surrounded by trees. A dream come true for a kid raised in western Kansas. These are the kinds of places that make you proud to be a Kansan. The trails were well kept and so much fun. I felt like a kid again. No mean feat for a woman turning 65 years old!
- Having worked in tourism and with small communities through my employer, the Kansas Sampler Foundation, I can confidently say that a state park will make a tremendous impact financially for those who live in this region. Already we have seen the response to how hikers and cyclists have flocked to the Base Camp in Humboldt and in western Kansas at Little Jerusalem. A new state park like in this area would continue that momentum. When visitors travel to these parks they leave a trail of dollars at convenience stores, gas pumps, restaurants, lodging establishments and downtown businesses, all adding to our tax base.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter of support and for giving consideration to this bill. I'll look forward to hearing a positive outcome in creating a new state park in southeast Kansas.

Sincerely,



WenDee Rowe  
Resident of Inman (McPherson County)



Dear Sen. Renee Erickson and the Senate Committee on Commerce,

It is my privilege to write to you today in support of Bill #HB2331, which proposes to accept the generous gift of the Lehigh Portland Trails and lake from Iola Industries, Inc.

As stewards of our natural resources and protectors of our state's heritage, I believe it is our duty to ensure that the trails and lake are preserved for future generations to enjoy. The proposed transfer of ownership to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks would allow us to achieve this goal, and I urge you to give this bill your full and careful consideration.

The Lehigh Portland Trails and lake are a treasure of the Iola community and a source of pride for our state. They represent the best of what Kansas has to offer, and their preservation is of the utmost importance. I am confident that the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks will continue to provide the expertise, dedication, and resources needed to maintain and improve these assets for years to come.

Furthermore, I want to acknowledge and commend the generous spirit of Iola Industries, Inc. Their donation is a testament to their commitment to the community and their belief in the importance of preserving and protecting these valuable assets. I am grateful for their generosity and for the positive impact it will have on the future of Iola and the state of Kansas.

I believe that by accepting this gift, we have an opportunity to make a lasting contribution to the future of our state. I urge you to give this bill your full and enthusiastic support, and to help ensure that the Lehigh Portland Trails and lake remain a source of pride and enjoyment for generations to come.

Thank you for your dedication and service to the people of Kansas.

Sincerely,

Ryan Sparks



3-19-23

March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

My name is Declan Darby Springer. I am six years old and live in Iola. My mommy is helping me write this letter to express my support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

I like to go out to Lehigh Portland Trails to ride my bike and walk. I like to find art out there, too. They have sculptures of lightening bugs and a big spider that I think could eat two people! I love to fish. Right now, my daddy takes me to Lake Farlington to fish, which means we have to get in the car and drive for quite a while to get there. If you create Lehigh Portland State Park, I could walk to the lake and fish. I am a very good fisherman! I know I will catch fish at Lehigh! I could send you pictures!

In the summer, my science camp visits Lehigh to explore all the cool things in nature. We have a fun time! There's even a cave we get to explore!

Please make Lehigh Portland State Park. I love to go out there to ride my bike, walk and explore. And I think it would be really fun to swim and fish out there, too. I could do this for the rest of my life!



*(I've been coming out to Lehigh since I was a baby. I even bring my aunt and uncle when they visit (picture on the left). This is the spider that is so big (middle pic)! My aunt and I like to look for animal tracks, too!)*

Thank you,  
*Declan*

Declan Darby  
Resident of Allen County

My fellow Kansans,

As I write to you today, I am proud to voice my unwavering support for HB2331. As a landowner, real estate investor, economist, and community servant, I fully appreciate the immeasurable value of the gift that Iola Industries Inc. has bestowed upon our great State.

Having explored many of Kansas's State Parks, as well as half of our Nation's National Parks, and traveled to over 50 countries across 5 continents, I have come to appreciate the importance of public space that can be enjoyed by all, while also being preserved for future generations to come.

As it stands, only a select few - roughly 500 people - have access to this unique and awe-inspiring space. Yet, if the State of Kansas does not accept this generous gift, the land will be parceled out and sold off for development. I believe it would be an unforgivable mistake to let such a unique natural resource go to waste, and be enjoyed by so few.

Moreover, the socioeconomic depressed area of the State desperately needs vitalization, and HB2331 is precisely the tool we need to help move the needle in the right direction.

Therefore, I implore each and every one of you, to stand with me and support HB2331. Together, we can ensure that this precious land will be enjoyed by all, preserved for future generations, and provide a vital spark of growth and hope for this great State.

Sincerely,

Job D. Springer



March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

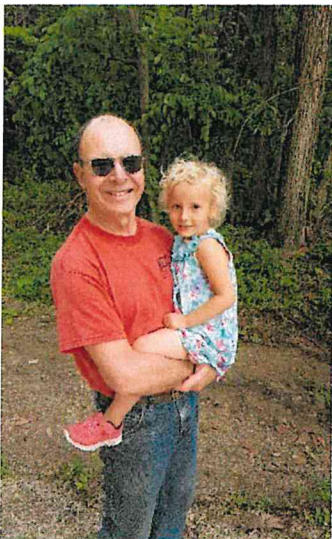
Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

Hi! My name is Moira Springer, and I am a ten-year-old resident of Allen County. I am writing to express my support for HB 2331 creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

In 2014, my dad and older brother started to help build the Lehigh Portland Trail System with many other volunteers. I would get to go out and play while they would cut trees, clear paths, and burn brush creating a new space for me and so many others to safely explore and play within. I have seen this property when there were no trails there, and I have watched it grow into the beautiful area it is today.

I have been able to explore John Brown's Cave and go all the way through it with my friends. And one night we got to see the Super Moon from Lehigh: it was beautiful!

I hope you create Lehigh Portland State Park out of this property that I love so much. This would mean that when I am older and have my own kids, we could spend time out there like I get to with my family now. It would mean that if my kids have kids...they could do the same. And it means kids from all over the state, and surrounding states, can come visit my community and see how beautiful southeast Kansas is.



*Left pic: Grandpa and me on the trails in 2016 (I was 4) a month before they opened.  
Right pic: I was asked to talk about how much I love Lehigh Portland for a video about green spaces in 2022 (I was 9).*

Thank you,  
*Moira Springer*

Moira Springer  
Resident of Allen County

March 17, 2023

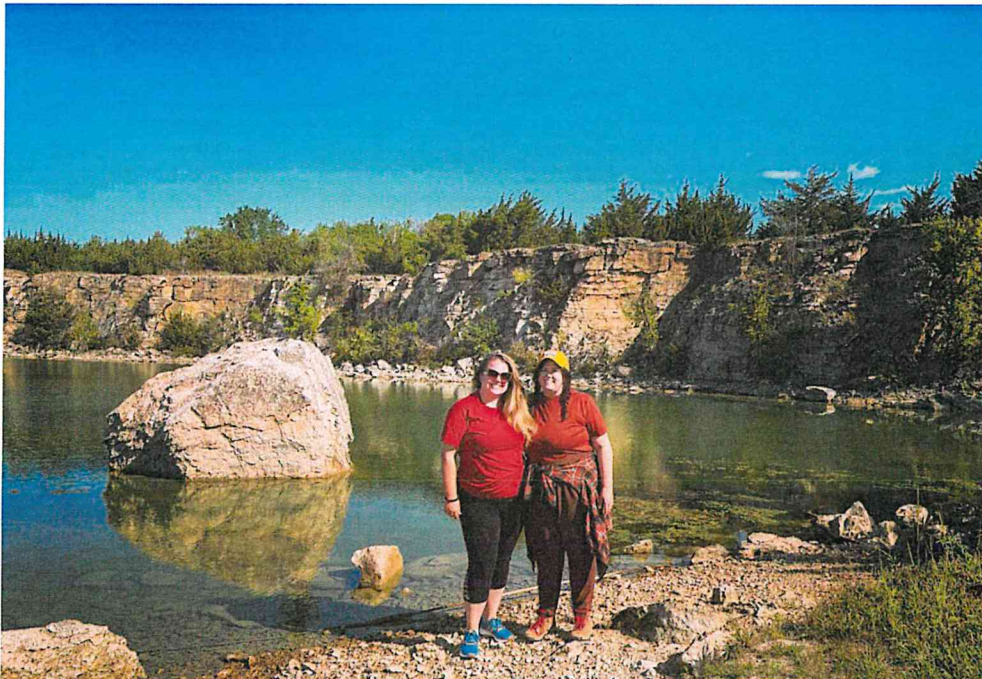
Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

I Tricia Stogsdill, am writing to express my strong support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Lehigh Portland becoming a State Park would greatly improve the economy and culture of my community! I am a performing arts educator, and have lived all over the country, but I was raised in Southeast Kansas and my entire extended family lives in the area. This park could rejuvenate our community for generations to come!

Anytime friends or family come to visit, we take them to the park. Everyone is always amazed that there is such a fantastic place tucked away in Southeast Kansas! Hiking outside improves both my mental and physical health, and Lehigh is the best place to do that. I enjoy the park in all seasons, and look forward to adding kayaking and camping to the list of activities I can do there.



Here is an image of me and my world-traveled friend Jessica Walling (who was visiting from California) at Lehigh. She has been to over 50 National Parks, and is currently hiking in Cape Town, South Africa. Even with her extensive park experience she was impressed by the beauty of Lehigh and it's potential!

Even though it is not yet a state park, Lehigh is already an attraction for out-of-state guests and locals alike. We spend our morning hiking, eat lunch at a local restaurant, and after that we check out some local shops. The park leads to greater support for local businesses. I see the choice to make Lehigh a State Park a choice between creating a vibrant and stable environment and economy in Southeast Kansas, or continuing to let our rural communities decline.

I was born and raised in rural Southeast Kansas, and even though I've lived all over the country, I believe that Southeast Kansas is a special place to call home. As a young professional, I know that many young professionals are looking for small communities with beautiful nature and great amenities in which to raise their families. Our community is primed to be that, but needs the recreational and economic support a park can bring!

Thank you so much for your time and consideration in regards to HB 2331. I know that this park can help Southeast Kansas thrive culturally and economically in perpetuity.

Sincerely,

Tricia Stogsdill



March 20, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

RE: HB2331

Dear Senator Erickson:

My name is Lori Stone and I am a resident of Iola, Ks. I am a resident who utilizes the Lehigh Trails many times during the week (whatever the temperature) to enjoy the outdoors and the scenic lake views while walking on the trails. I am writing to express my support for HB2331 in the creation of Lehigh Portland State Park.

It is my opinion the designation of the Lehigh Portland trails as a Kansas State Park would benefit myself and others personally and my local community because a state park has the potential to reach many persons who currently live and/or travel to our community to experience the trails and lake amenities. As a former 5th grade teacher, a state park designation could be utilized in the classroom curriculum if a teacher so desired also.

I believe designating Lehigh Portland State Park will positively impact our community and surrounding areas in our region with respect to local businesses, recreation, and healthy lifestyles. Maybe other communities in the State of Kansas would take the initiative to create an area for walking and healthy lifestyles and model it after the Lehigh Trails. I would encourage you to continue supporting this bill as it moves through the Senate.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lori Stone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lori Stone  
1931 Rhode Island Rd  
Iola, KS 66749

Bruce Symes  
Allen County Commissioner  
410 N. Oak, Lot 6  
Iola KS 66749

March 17, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

I am Bruce Symes, a resident of Iola and Allen County for 37 years and currently a member of the Allen County Commission, and am writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

The Allen County Commission approved a letter of support for gifting of the Lehigh lake by Iola Industries to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks at our Feb. 7 meeting to send to the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee. Since it has now passed the House, I also wanted to write a personal letter telling you why I am excited by the prospect for this state park and what it will add to our community, county and region of Southeast Kansas.

Our small town and rural county are proud of many of our qualities which enhance our living and can attract visitors and new residents. We have a great school system, a strong business and industry base, a hospital affiliated with St. Luke's Health System, the Bowlus Fine Arts Center, Allen Community College, and a cooperative, progressive spirit that always keeps us striving to be better.

We have almost 15 miles of trails in our community, thanks to Thrive Allen County and the Kansas rail-trail system. A large segment of these trails are next to the Lehigh quarry, which would add to its appeal as a State Park. Such designation of the Lehigh Portland State Park would be a great benefit to area residents looking for recreational and healthful living opportunities and would help the regional economy through tourism.

I am grateful to Iola Industries for making this donation of property to the state, and I ask that the Senate Commerce Committee approve its being made part of Kansas's state parks system. Iola and Allen County will be proud stewards of our state resources – financial and natural – if this plan comes to fruition.

Sincerely,

*Bruce Symes*

Bruce Symes, Iola KS

March 20, 2023

Sen. Rennee Erickson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

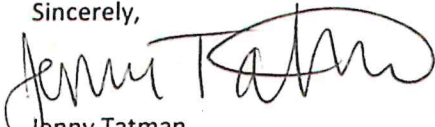
I, Jenny Tatman, am writing to express my support for HB2331 creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

I recently moved to Coffey County from Kansas City with my husband and two young children. One of the draws for us in moving to a small rural community from the city was more opportunities for local outdoor recreation. We are fortunate to have Melvern Lake, and Eisenhower State Park, just 20 miles away from where we live. We enjoy camping, hiking, and fishing as a family. My husband and I are fortunate to be able to share the enjoyment of nature with our children. My family, as well as others, would benefit from having access to the Lehigh Portland State Park as a new destination to visit, just a short driving distance from where we live.

As much as we enjoy having close access to Eisenhower, I know that in the last few years there has been an influx of visitors to our local state park. This brings in revenue from outside of our county, as people staying at the park stop at our gas stations, eat at our local restaurants, etc. With camping reservations being booked 6 months or more in advance, I believe there is a need for a state park in Southeast Kansas.

I work in Allen County, and I have visited portions of the Lehigh Portland Trails. I think that this would be an excellent location for a new state park. It would benefit all Kansas residents by providing access for everyone to enjoy the outdoor recreational activities that would be offered, and would significantly benefit residents in Southeast Kansas from an economic development standpoint.

Sincerely,



Jenny Tatman  
Resident of Lebo, Kansas





March 19, 2023

Senator Renee Erickson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> Street  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Erickson,

I am Julie Turnipseed, Director of Economic Development in Anderson County Kansas. We are the county just north of Allen County. I am writing to express my support of HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

One of the most important strategies in business recruitment is quality of life. People can put their business anywhere these days. When you look at the factors that determine location of a new business Quality of Life is in the top five on the list.

Creating Lehigh Portland Trails as a State Park would certainly stimulate regional economic competitiveness and opportunity for business by increasing our opportunities regionally to attract and retain businesses. Businesses must have a workforce and that workforce must have a place for family, friends, and guests to relax and enjoy life. This park would do all of those. The amenities of a 100+ acers of rugged woodlands, scenic views, and a spring fed quarry lake along with over 14 miles of rail-trail-style gravel surfaced trails all would be ingredients for an exceptional quality of life/ healthy lifestyle.

I urge you to please make Lehigh Portland a State Park.

Thank you for all you do for our State.

Sincerely,

*Julie Turnipseed*

Julie Turnipseed  
Director  
Anderson County Development Agency

3/19/23

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10 th St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

I Erik Unruh, am writing to express my support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

My family moved back to Kansas in 2022. At the time, we were living in Albuquerque, New Mexico, surrounded by beautiful mountains filled with alpine lakes, beautiful aspens and towering pines. We were excited to move back home to Kansas, but leaving the accessibility of the mountain west was not exciting. Our search for a community in Kansas spanned from western Kansas to Kansas City and ultimately Iola. On a visit to meet my future employer, a group of community organizers took us to the Lehigh trails along the northern edge of the proposed state park. We were floored. The stunning natural beauty hooked us. Our imaginations ran wild with the opportunity to hike, swim and explore with our son. Now, whenever we have visitors in town, the Lehigh Trails are a must see. The potential to preserve the natural beauty of the entire lake and surrounding area, to incorporate educational activities and to make it an environmental gemstone for our area is an opportunity that we cannot miss. A state park in Allen county will provide much needed economic development, increased access for healthy activities and will be a destination for visitors from across the region. Investing in this park means generations will have the opportunity to enjoy the unique Kansas beauty here in our backyard.

Sincerely,

Erik Unruh, MD, MPH  
Resident of Iola, KS

March 17, 2023  
Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10 th St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

I, Maria Zielinski Unruh, am writing to express my support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

In 2021 my husband began to plant the seed of a career opportunity in Southeast Kansas. At the time we were living in New Mexico. With hiking and camping at an arm's reach, I had grown accustomed to outdoor opportunities. When my son was born, we integrated him into our passion for being outdoors. He went on his first hike at 2 months old and we soon discovered being outside was more energizing with a toddler on our backs. We found community and connection when we were outdoors, and it seamlessly integrated into our lifestyle.



My husband is a family medicine physician and always had a passion for practicing in a rural setting. It was hard for me to think about giving up the options a larger City provides. Iola, Kansas – he told me, *just think about it.*

We decided to visit and learn more about the position. The day arrived, and I was encouraged to join in during the day. We were greeted with friendly faces and welcoming personalities. Over the morning we heard an extensive list aligning with husband's professional passions, but I wasn't convinced we would fit here as a family system. What was something geared for myself and my son? How would we find connection?

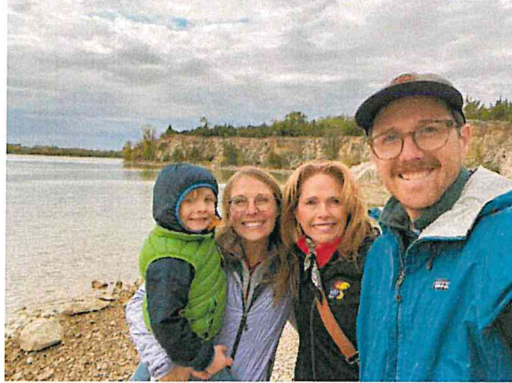
The city tour concluded the visit, and we were taken out to Lehigh Portland Trails. We walked to the edge of the quarry and for a few moments, I forgot I was in rural Kansas. I saw well maintained trails and a



beautiful expansive lake. It was serene. It felt welcoming. It lit up the adventurous spirit within me. Our son was covered in mud with a fistful of “treasures” and a big smile on his face. The other thing I realized--it took us 5-minutes to get there.

This moment was a turning point. I began to start dreaming about living here.

My family and I moved to Iola Fall of 2022.



I am an Electrical Engineer and a Project Manager. One thing we educate our clients is to trust the process. A project is composed of hundreds of little steps and questions, the magnitude of unknowns can be overwhelming. Every question is valid and deserves attention, and following the proper sequence is important. I hope we can all recognize the current stage of this future legacy. The project is in its infancy and the first step is making sure it can move forward. Then it will be time to get to work and dig into the details.

I appreciate you considering the many Kansans that will be able to take advantage of this beautiful property. It will allow Kansans to nourish both their mental and physical health. It will create community.

Sincerely,

Maria Dzi Unruh

Maria Zielinski Unruh  
Resident of Iola, KS

March 20, 2023

Senator Renee Erickson  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10th St.  
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Senator Renee Erickson and members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

My name is Curtis Utley, and my wife, Amy and I are writing to express our support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Our family has owned and operated a small business (Utley's Lola Auto Body, Inc.) in Lola, Kansas since 1974. Our business is located alongside one of the many new trails that connect to the proposed Lehigh Portland State Park. Every day we see how people, young and old, use the trail. It helps our young and old stay active and healthy. Adding the State Park designation will further create opportunities for our existing businesses to survive and provide a beautiful place for others to visit.

I spent a lot of time growing up at The Elks Lake. My parents were Elks members and were instrumental in helping develop the area. It will be wonderful to have a place where ALL people have access to this beautiful asset!

We envision The Lehigh Portland Park becoming a major destination spot for people all over the State and Country. With climate change, traffic and high cost of living affecting the coastal areas, more and more people are making their way to the central part of the United States. Having a destination like Lehigh Portland Park will make those people want to stay!

PLEASE VOTE YES TO SUPPORT HB2331, CREATING LEHIGH PORTLAND STATE PARK!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Curtis and Amy Utley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Curtis and Amy Utley  
Residents of Lola, Kansas

March 17, 2023

Senator Renee Erickson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, KS. 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

I am writing to ask you to support HB 2331 providing for the establishment of Lehigh State Park in Allen County. I have been a resident of Allen County for over 55 years and have been able to enjoy the trails at Lehigh since they were built a few years ago. I know this park would be beneficial to all residents of Allen County and would be great for our local and state economies. The area is just beautiful. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Alan Weber  
Humboldt, KS



March 20, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Senator Erickson and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce,

We, Chris and Elizabeth Wehlage, are writing to express our support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

As residents of Chanute, Kansas, we regularly visit and utilize the Lehigh Portland trails and lake property for outdoor recreational opportunities. Lehigh Portland provides residents of Southeast Kansas and beyond the opportunity to engage and interact with the outdoors. Through physical exercise or imaginative exploration, the benefits of a recreational outdoor space is invaluable to mental, physical and emotional well being. With a state park designation, this would ensure that not only do Southeast Kansas residents get to continue to enjoy this space with continued improvements but also draw outside tourism to the area by highlighting it among other state parks in Kansas.

We hope that you will take all of the positive opportunities this would create for the citizens and economy of Southeast Kansas into consideration and pass HB 2331.

Sincerely,

Chris and Elizabeth Wehlage  
Residents of Chanute, Kansas

To the Honorable Kansas State Representatives and Senators

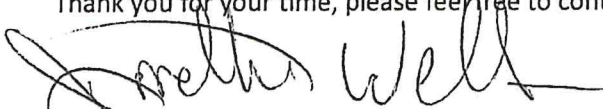
My name is Jon Wells and am originally from Tulsa, OK. I moved to lola in 2008, in the last 15 years have had the honor and privilege to serve as the Exalted Ruler (president) of the lola Elks # 569 from 2017-2018. I have also served on the city council from 2013-2017 and as the Mayor of the City of lola from 2017-2021. I continue to volunteer as an officer in the lola Elks # 569 and on multiple boards including the Allen County Historical Society, Buster Keaton Film Festival, and the Allen Regional Transit. I believe these experiences give me a unique insight into the current debate and hope you will approve the new state park and funding for it.

As a former leader of the lola Elks #569, we have been stewards of the property for over 40 years. This will hurt our revenue and membership, but I personally believe the organization will still be successful in our mission of helping the community, youth, and veterans. The "Elks' Lake" was a selling point we used to obtain new members and the Elks were excellent stewards of the property. We made countless improvements and opened our gates to the community for festivals, events, Boy Scout led flag retirements, and to host July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks shows. These facts are not debated by anyone, and for many Elk members this is a sad day. I am sure you will receive many emails and phone calls urging you to reject the proposal.

However, the land was never the Elks. I have worked closely with lola Industries and for years they have raised concerns about their long-term plans with their property. Their property rights, donation, hopes, and dreams for this land should be respected. In the 1970s, lola Industries had the foresight to purchase what was then a 60-foot deep mudpuddle and see the potential. I lived in lola for 5-6 years before I knew the lake existed in my own back yard, and so joined the Elks for access. The trails opened this hidden gem to the public, but for the better part of 40 years lola Industries has actively sought to make this property a public space.

As the former mayor, I also believe this is in the best interest of the City of lola. While I am not sure this will bring a fiscal windfall to the area, I can assure you this project will attract talented members to our region and community and improve the lives of every resident in Southeast Kansas.

Thank you for your time, please feel free to contact me to discuss the issue further.



Jon Wells, Phd.

918-724-0325

[jpwells83@yahoo.com](mailto:jpwells83@yahoo.com)

Former Mayor of the City of lola

Former Exalted Rule lola Elks # 569



# Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas

March 20, 2023

Senator Renee Erickson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol, 300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chair Erickson and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the board, staff and patients of the Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas, am writing to express our support for HB2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Our organization provides healthcare services (medical, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy and related care) throughout the region to more than 72,000 individuals each year. We have sixteen sites across the region and have a full service site in Iola (which, we are proud to say, is connected to the Prairie Spirit Trail) and a school-based health center in the new Iola Elementary School. We have provided services in Iola since 2008 and currently provide sixty-eight high-paying jobs with excellent benefits in the community.

Overall wellness is a critical focus of our efforts to increase prevention, improve health and reduce the overall cost of care. We have much work ahead of us. In terms of Kansas County Health Rankings, Allen ranks 90th in health outcomes and 93rd in health factors. Additionally, 33% are considered to be physically inactive compared to a state average of 27% and just 59% of Allen Countians have access to exercise opportunities compared to a state rate of 73%.

Designating Lehigh Portland State Park will positively impact the local community by providing additional recreational opportunities, will attract outdoor tourism and, we believe, will be a great advantage in recruiting healthcare providers, which are so desperately needed, to a region of our state that is critically underserved and unhealthy.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Jason Wesco, President and Chief Strategy Officer.



March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

I Elizabeth Wilcox, am writing to express my support for [HB2331](#) creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

My family and I recently relocated to Iola from Washington State, where we had access to an extensive state park system and countless opportunities to be outdoors and enjoy nature. When we decided to move to the Midwest, we knew finding an area that had outdoor recreation opportunities was very important to us.

The Iola area has a unique opportunity to become home to a new state park, Lehigh Portland State Park, where residents and visitors can experience the unique outdoor opportunities that our region has to offer. If Lehigh Portland was designated as a state park, it would ensure the land was properly maintained, improve safety, and provide access to bathrooms, water, and camping. The park would attract visitors from all over the region, state, and beyond. This would result in more opportunity for business, stimulating economic competitiveness in our region.

My husband and I visit the Lehigh Portland Trails often, with our toddler. The thought that we could essentially go camping in our backyard and wake up to the sunrise over the beautiful quarry lake is something that excites us beyond measure. I grew up camping in state parks and I intend to give my son the same opportunities. Having Lehigh Portland State Park near Iola would be an enormous asset to our town, the region, and our state. This is an incredible opportunity to invest in our future and add to our state parks system.

Sincerely,

*Elizabeth Wilcox*

Elizabeth Wilcox  
Resident of Iola



Bobbi Williams  
1303 NW 82<sup>nd</sup> Ter  
Columbus, KS 66725  
[williamsbobbi9@gmail.com](mailto:williamsbobbi9@gmail.com)  
620.674.1761

March 18, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

I, Bobbi Williams, am writing to express my support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park.

Since retirement almost three years ago, I've focused more on health and wellness of older adults. The proposed Lehigh Portland State Park would provide a place for older adults of southeast Kansas to gather and enjoy the amenities close to home. In addition to the physical activity opportunities, the social-emotional benefits of working and playing in nature with family and friends will improve all-around health and wellness.

As a mother and grandmother, I know my own children and their young, growing families will enjoy the hiking and biking trails offered not only in Lehigh Portland but in the surrounding areas and could easily make the new park a weekend destination, taking advantage of camping and small businesses in the surrounding area.

The small communities of southeast Kansas have been working hard to improve their physical environments regarding recreation and healthy lifestyles. To be able to punctuate individual community and county efforts with Lehigh Portland State Park will make our corner of the State a destination for tourists, supporting local businesses and bringing tax dollars to the State of Kansas.

Please help us uncover this hidden gem in SEK by passing and fully funding HB 2331.

Sincerely,



Bobbi Williams, Ed.D.  
Retired Superintendent of Schools

Senator Renee Erickson, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce

Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW. 10th St.  
Topeka, KS 66612

Regarding HB 2331 the creation of Lehigh Portland State Park

Dear Senator Erickson,

As chairman of the board of Thrive Allen County and as someone who has spent time volunteering to create the Lehigh Trails system, I am excited at the prospect of making the site available to a broader group of individuals interested in enjoying Southeast Kansas. My wife, Susan Lynn, and I live on Elm Creek adjacent to the property given to the state by lola Industries. We now delight in seeing bikers and hikers on the other side of the creek enjoying the outdoors. This is what we hoped would happen when the trails were first developed.

The expansion of the lake's use and the trails will be a game-changer for Allen County and Southeast Kansas. I have talked to numerous people on the trails that have come from other parts of the state or even from Missouri or Oklahoma to enjoy what's been created. The beautiful lake will only add to this attraction.

We look forward to working with the state of Kansas and thank you for your time and effort looking at this wonderful opportunity.

Sincerely yours

Brian Wolfe MD  
Chairman Thrive Allen County



March 19, 2023

Sen. Renee Erickson, Chairwoman  
Senate Commerce Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
300 SW 10<sup>th</sup> St.  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairwoman Erickson and Members of the Kansas Senate Commerce Committee,

I Dakota Wynn, am writing to express my support for HB 2331, creating Lehigh Portland State Park. I have listed some benefits this will have in our community:

State parks commonly feature picnic areas and pavilions and other additional facilities like bathrooms, parking, indoor recreation space, event space and on-site park attendants. The benefits of parks make them irresistible to surrounding residents. This is a huge draw for me considering I have visited most of the state parks here in Kansas. Camping, fishing, boating and hiking are just some of the draws for me when visiting parks such as Fall River State Park, Elk City State Park and Meade state park.

I believe this will bring enjoyment for all families, ages and generations to come. They will be able to experience outdoor life at its finest without having to travel to far from home. Lehigh Portland trails are a huge attraction to this area and only makes sense to incorporate the lake and the surrounding area into to a state park open to the public for all to enjoy such activities as fishing, boating, hiking, and camping.

Another benefit it would bring in tourism into the community and be an attraction for new business small and large looking to build in rural areas. I work 9 months out of the year in Sioux Falls South Dakota building playgrounds and even thought about relocating, but Kansas is my home and by adding a state park to the community I grew up in will just confirm my belief that Kansas is the best state to reside in and always looking for ways to grow our state and communities. Lehigh Portland State Park will provide outdoor experience for generations to come and be another great reason why I call Allen County Kansas home.

Sincerely,



Dakota Wynn

Lawrence Kansas