

Testimony on House Bill 2070
House Transportation Committee

Presented by

Mary Morrison

Seaman High School

Good afternoon Chairman Proehl and members of the House Transportation Committee. My name is Mary Morrison. I would like to begin with a story about a woman that John Armstrong rescued while working on the Underground Railroad. Ann Clarke was an African American slave in Lecompton. Knowing that her life could be better elsewhere she ran away, only to shortly be returned by pro-slavery men looking to exchange her life for a financial reward. Shortly after these occurrences, she escaped at night and hid in a ravine until the next morning. She remembered that the men around her were drunk yet the women were eyeing her heavily. Regardless, she took her chances and yet again ran away. Ann walked down a dirt path until she ran into one of her master's neighbors, a man well known around the community as Dr. Barker. She, again, took a chance and approached Dr. Barker, hoping he would not return her to slavery. He brought her to his home, where she stayed for six weeks. On that sixth week she was introduced to a man by the name of John Armstrong. John Armstrong was a conductor of the Underground Railroad in Topeka and to this day it is unknown exactly how many people he delivered from slavery. Ann's story was recorded and shared by John Armstrong. He mentions that they left sometime in early February 1857. One hundred and sixty two years ago, a woman's life was changed because of the actions of John Armstrong. According to his own accounts she was released in Civil Bend, Iowa and went on to have children in Lawrence County, Missouri while also maintaining a friendship with John and regularly sent him mail. John Armstrong's courage and bravery saved this women's life and ultimately resulted in one of the most well known stories of a slave escaping through the underground railroad system, in Kansas. Thank you for your time.