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HB2237

Thank you, Madam Chair, and members of the Committee:

HB2237 is a bill to extend the eligible time-period for the Rural Opportunity Zone (**ROZ**) student loan repayment program and income tax credit two years from July 1, 2021 to July 1, 2023.

The reason for this Sunset extension will be explained in more detail by an upcoming proponent, Trisha Purdon, The Executive Director of the Montgomery County Action Council. However, in short, this extension is being taken as a precaution to help insure this valuable rural development program doesn't sunset before modifications to the current program, outlined in just received HB 2431 can be considered next session. For my county, Montgomery, this program has been an important recruiting tool to draw new residents to our county to work, and more importantly to live, rather than across in Oklahoma.

When Montgomery County requested entry into the program, we had over 12% of our workforce living out of state. Two large employers each had 33% of their workforce living out of state, usually in Oklahoma. A number of these were key employees who had been recruited to work in these facilities. Our intent for being a ROZ county was to use the program to entice these employees to live in our county, in order to help increase revenue for county and cities, and to capture the involvement of these individuals, and their families, in our communities. A secondary plus was that it helped replace residents that have passed away, moved to be closer to family, or moved for any other reason.

Has it worked ...

- Montgomery County has received well over 125 application since the program became available.
- Applicants include, Doctors, small business owners/managers, Cessna pilots, Nurses, engineers, K-12 & college teachers and business leaders.
- These individuals and families, have purchased homes (Paying property tax), furniture, groceries, clothing, school supplies, automobiles, etc. (Paying Sales tax), joined community organizations, donated volunteer hours and contributed money to civic organizations, churches and many other charities and they have added students to our schools.
- There are now county employers that list the ROZ program as a reason that a recruit should consider working for them and moving to MG County.
- A week before the session began, I had a young engineer working for a large employer in the county call asking to do everything possible ensure the ROZ program continues. He stated he accepted an engineering position MG County immediately after graduating from the University of Nebraska, with an intent to live in nearby Bartlesville OK. However, after being informed of the ROZ benefits, he elected to live in MG County. He indicated he wanted the program to continue, as he is using ROZ to recruit several of his college engineer friends to move to MG County to live and work after graduation this spring.

In closing, this sunset extension is important, to ensure the program does not sunset before HB 2431 can be considered. MG County and 77 other ROZ counties will appreciate your favorable consideration of HB2237.

Jim Kelly
 Kansas House District #11