

Moving Forward Together!

The 2024 Emporia Community Partners Joint Legislative Statement is a collaborative effort of 11 community partners. These Community Partners support safety and inclusion for all. The populations of our communities is diverse, and we celebrate our differences.

Within this statement you will see our concerns and passion for our Economic Development, Health Care, Child Care, Tax Policy, and Education at all levels.

2024 Joint Legislative Statement for the Emporia & Lyon County Area



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Education

Education is essential to the vitality and dynamism of the Emporia – Lyon County community. To ensure equity, every public-school student in Kansas deserves access to a high-quality education preparing them to be college and career ready. We support the requests of the Kansas Board of Regents to restore funding for public universities, community colleges, and technical colleges to pre-pandemic levels.

Emporia State University:

We ask the Kansas Legislature to:

- Support the regional stabilization model to provide ongoing financial support for the three regional universities. The support focuses on workforce development, regional economic development, and the needs of the regional universities who contribute millions of dollars to their respective local economies.
- Continue support for need-based aid for students, particularly important to the recruitment and retention of rural students.
- Continue state support for capital renewal initiative and demolition of buildings on campus.
- Continue support for cybersecurity and IT infrastructure.
- Continue support for student success initiatives and retention.

Flint Hills Technical College:

We ask the Kansas Legislature to:

- Continue to fund SB 155 Excel in CTE Initiative to enhance career technical education in Kansas and better prepare high school students with approved technical courses to support workforce development needs in the region.
- Continue to support the Capital Outlay increase to technical colleges to respond to technical equipment, infrastructure and facility maintenance needs.

- Continue to support the base grant that supports technical college operational needs to employ and retain highly qualified staff and faculty and expand technical education programming to support regional workforce development needs.
- Continue to support the Cybersecurity/IT infrastructure and Apprenticeship/Business Engagement funds for 2-year colleges to engage with regional economic development partners and advance workforce initiatives.
- Expand deferred maintenance funds to the 2-year colleges to support facility maintenance and planning.

For Pre-K to 12:

We ask the Kansas Legislature to:

- Repeal or further clarify SB113 of 2023 provisions in relation to the disposition of district property.
- Maintain KSHSAA's responsibility to oversee student athletics and activities. Research has proven that students are more academically successful when they are involved in athletics or activities during their school careers. School districts need to have local control over expectations of student engagement that exceed KSHSAA's minimum requirements.
- Return KPERs 3 to KPERs 2 and create more flexibility within KPERs to enhance the recruitment and retention of highly qualified school district staff.
- Meet the statutory obligation to reimburse special education service costs at the 92% mandatory rate of excess costs. At this time, it is only funded at 69%, which requires school districts to shift funds away from all students in order to pay for federally required special education services.



Childcare

We support efforts to streamline state programs that impact the delivery of childcare services. This current system is spread across several state agencies, creating bureaucracy that hinders our ability to efficiently implement the necessary interventions and solutions to scale up the delivery of high quality, affordable early childcare and education. METL also supports the implementation of the recommendations of the Special Committee on Child Care Centers and Child Care Homes, including continued funding of the Child Care Accelerator Grant Program to help build new childcare facilities.

We ask the Kansas Legislature to:

- Support creation of a Child Care Business Incentive Grant and Child Care Challenge Funding like the ones offered in the State of Iowa.
- Support providing benefits to employers assisting in establishing childcare centers.

Tax Policy

Emporia and Lyon County residents recognize the importance of a balanced and fair tax policy for our State. Tax policy can drive job growth and recruit new businesses by building excellent infrastructure, providing high quality education, and enhancing the health and quality of life for our citizens.

We support the elimination of sales tax on food at the state level while allowing city and county municipalities to continue to collect local sales taxes.

Healthcare

High quality, affordable health care and services are essential for a thriving and healthy community. We support primary and specialty care, behavioral health care, dental care, substance use care, public health, and various wellness initiatives that ensure sufficient funding for providers.

We ask the Kansas Legislature to:

- Support Medicaid Expansion to maximize available federal funding.
- Support Medicaid to allow Community Health Worker Program services with equivalent reimbursement as an office visit in both Rural Health Clinic and Non-Rural Health Clinic settings.
- Fund rural recruitment efforts and incentives in the healthcare industries to assist in retaining and keeping a quality workforce. (Ex. 79-32,267. Tax credit for certain taxpayers domiciled in a rural opportunity zone, Student Loan Repayment Assistance.)
- Protect 340B program that affords health centers and other safety net providers the ability to purchase pharmaceuticals at deep discounts. Health Centers use these savings to expand access to needed healthcare services not typically reimbursed by insurers or other payors.



Economic Development

The most pressing issue facing our business and industry is the difficulty recruiting and retaining employees. The state must become a partner in assisting our communities to address issues such as affordable housing, childcare, and our aging infrastructure. All are critical for the recruitment and retention of employees and for the growth of our business and industry. We support fully funding the State Transportation program and will work as a partner in our regional projects. Current major transportation priorities include grade separations along the BNSF transcontinental double tracks through Emporia and improving all major transportation networks in the county.

We ask the Kansas Legislature to:

- Fund the Eisenhower Legacy Transportation Program (IKE) that provides a responsive framework for the state's future through a holistic approach that includes economic development and broadband expansion as primary factors for consideration.
- Fully fund and implement incentive programs such as PEAK, HPIP, CDBG, STAR, ROZ, and JCF which are critical to the recruitment of new and expansion of existing businesses.
- Support the Kansas Department of Commerce efforts to push forward with implementation of the Kansas Framework for Growth. The plan's focus on regional industry sectors reflects important geographic differences, changing demographics, and economic trends.
- Create targeted incentive policies that reward new job creation, higher wages, and capital investment tied to local performance standards that are identified in the Kansas Framework for Growth.
- Continue funding for small business development and entrepreneurship programs like Network Kansas, Kansas Manufacturing Solutions, and the Small Business Development Centers.
- Support local control over the use of TIF, CID, TDD, IRB, and tax abatements which require detailed knowledge about the local economic climate and tax environment.
- Create programs that focus on work-ready skill training and removing barriers to employment as outlined in Kansas Chamber's The Challenge to Compete – Kansas Workforce 2020 report.
- Create policies that allow more companies to qualify for the Kansas Child Day Care Assistance Credit.
- Create a property tax exemption for all center-based licensed childcare facilities.
- Support efforts to expand broadband throughout the state utilizing the Office of Broadband Development within the Kansas Department of Commerce as a clearinghouse to leverage opportunities and facilitate conversations between service providers and users.
- Support reinstating the Sales Tax Project Exemption benefit to encourage capital investment and new construction instead of having a company undergo an IRB issuance simply to become eligible for the sales tax exemption.
- Support the creation of a State low interest revolving loan fund to finance development in Reinvestment Housing Incentive Districts and the creation of legislation that results in increased housing statewide based on the 2021 statewide housing study.
- Support removal of the unit limitations in the new Reinvestment Housing Incentive Districts legislation that was passed in 2023.