



To: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chair

From: Barth Crouch, Chair, Ranchland Trust of Kansas

Date: January 22, 2024

Re: HB 2541 – Establishing a state conservation fund

Chairman Rahjes and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2541. Ranchland Trust of Kansas is an affiliate of the Kansas Livestock Association. We are in the business of holding conservation easements and improving working landscapes. The mission of Ranchland Trust is to preserve Kansas ranching heritage and open spaces for future generations through conservation of working landscapes. We are members of the Kansans for Conservation Coalition, which has led the collaborative drafting process of HB 2541.

Conservation and proper management of our working landscapes is vital to the quality of life in Kansas. Agriculture and its economic success, public health, and future generations are all dependent upon us maintaining and protecting our natural resources. As it currently stands, the state does not provide proper funding for doing this work and we are leaving millions of dollars on the table that could be obtained through federal or private matching dollars. Many agricultural producers wish to place a conservation easement on their land and preserve it as a working landscape. Unfortunately, there are no funds to compensate them in this effort. All four of our state neighbors have funds established dedicated to conservation funding.

Ranchland Trust of Kansas is a 501(c)3 entity. We have the resources and necessary expertise to assist landowners in applying for conservation easements. What we don't have is the necessary funding to enable all those who wish to conserve their land to do so. The funding generated by HB 2541 would help us do so.

All the coalition members believe that the establishment of state conservation funding will benefit all Kansans and allow us to properly preserve the resources that were bestowed upon us and, perhaps most importantly, enable the state to take advantage of matching opportunities. Consequently, we ask you to support HB 2541.

Barth Crouch, Chair
Ranchland Trust of Kansas



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