

KANSAS LAND TRUST

PERMANENTLY PROTECTING LAND IN KANSAS

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

From: Kaitlin Stanley, Executive Director of the Kansas Land Trust

Date: January 22nd, 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. The Kansas Land Trust works to protect lands of ecological, cultural, recreational, and agricultural lands for future generations. We are members of the Kansans for Conservation coalition which has led the collaborative drafting process of HB 2541.

Conservation is the proper management of our natural resources and there are few investments more critical to the quality of life in Kansas. Our economic success, public health, and future generations are dependent upon us maintaining and improving these resources. Currently, the state does not provide the proper funding for this work and is subsequently losing out on federal or private matching dollars to the 35 states that have already established dedicated conservation funding, including all four of our neighbors.

The Kansas Land Trust permanently protects land by working with landowners to create voluntary agreements that uphold the conservation values of their property. Since 1991, KLT has protected 80 properties, covering 30,557 acres of prairie, 3,661 acres of prime farmland, 173 miles of stream banks, seven lands with a threatened species, and 1,335 acres of public access for recreation. Relying on support from donor contributions and grants, KLT accomplishes a great deal with limited resources, ensuring special places are protected for future generations of Kansans. Yet there are far more lands to protect than our resource pool allows. As an accredited land trust, we are connected with neighboring land trusts in our region who demonstrate the incredible cohesive public benefits that are made possible by state funding support. Without the reliable and sustainable support of state funding in Kansas, the threat of destruction of significant places will increasingly become a reality.

We are eager to participate in the opportunities that HB 2541 will create for conservation across Kansas. As outlined above and by our fellow coalition members, the establishment of state conservation funding benefits all Kansans, allows for the proper stewardship of the resources bestowed upon us, and enables the state to be competitive for match opportunities. Therefore, we ask you to support HB 2541.

