



Date: March 15th, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
Senator Dan Kerschen, Chair

From: Justin Cobb, Government Relations Manager
The Nature Conservancy in Kansas

RE: Oral Proponent Testimony – HB 2302

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2302. The Nature Conservancy is a nonpartisan, conservation nonprofit that has worked for over 30 years in Kansas to fulfill our mission of conserving the lands and water on which all life depends. We have permanently conserved over 150,000 acres in Kansas including five preserves that are open to the public. We are dedicated to conserving the natural heritage of the state and are active members of the Kansans for Conservation coalition that seeks to enhance state funding for conservation.

The water crisis has been acknowledged for decades and threatens the foundations of Kansas economies and ecosystems. HB 2302 is the product of hours of expert testimony and broad stakeholder consultations on the subject. There is no overnight solution for major areas of concern, such as the High Plains Aquifer, but this bill would put tools in the hands of Kansans to make significant progress.

The Nature Conservancy cautions against any adjustments to the bill that weaken the surety of the funding. The existing five-year sunset already puts tension on the proper and complete administration of the funding. The history of lacking State General Fund transfers to the State Water Plan Fund demonstrate that this is a realistic concern. The sales tax carve-off is widely supported, more secure, and backed by the Blue Ribbon Funding Task Force. On an issue many Kansans rank as extremely important, taxpayer funds should not be allowed to be diverted from taxpayer priorities.

The Nature Conservancy encourages the committee to recommend HB 2302 favorably.