

Kansas Horse Council
Opening Statement to the Chairman and
Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture

February 20, 2013

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Senate Ag Committee,

On behalf of the Kansas Horse Council, I would like to thank you for your consideration of proposed Senate Bill 87, the Kansas Equine Education and Promotion Act.

It may be said that the history of Kansas was written from the back of a horse. To the Native Americans who first inhabited this great land, to the wagon trains that brought the early settlers, to the Calvary at Fort Riley, to the present day Flint Hills Cowboy, the horse has been a willing and able partner.

Today, the horse in Kansas has come under pressure due to the economic downturn, loss of riding venues, and increased competition from other leisure activities. Through the establishment of the Kansas Equine Education and Promotion (K.E.E.P) Board equine organizations will have a resource to help fund their programs and ensure that the horse is part of the Kansas landscape for generations to come.

SB 87 would create a voluntary commercial equine feed assessment program. The program would generate revenue to build and sustain equine activities, education, research and marketing programs in Kansas. As drafted, SB 87 would establish an independent board of directors to manage the KEEP program. The Board would entertain grant applications from the public at large, weigh the merits of the applications and award grants.

SB 87 allows for an assessment on commercial equine feed sold in Kansas not to exceed \$2.00 per ton, which is 5 cents on each fifty pound feedbag. By our estimates, this will cost approximately \$1.80 per horse, per year. It will be the responsibility of feed manufacturers to aggregate and remit assessments to the KEEP board twice each year at the same time as they submit their tonnage tax report. It is important for the Committee to be aware that the assessment is completely voluntary. SB 87 allows individual consumers – the horse owner – to receive a full refund of the assessment upon request.

SB 87 states that the KEEP board will use assessment revenue to support research and public education for equine-related issues, promote the development of and uses for equine and create public awareness of the value of equine activities. There are numerous unfunded and underfunded equine programs in Kansas. Potential uses for the grant money created by K.E.E.P. include Therapeutic Riding Centers, 4H Programs, Saddle Club Facility Improvements, Trails development and maintenance, Military Wounded Warrior Programs, Education

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Attachment # 8-1

Dennis Goodwin, KS Horse Council

SB87

Outreach, Surveys and Research, Castration Clinics and Voluntary Euthanasia programs to name just a few. The possibilities for public education and awareness are virtually endless.

Unlike many livestock and agricultural commodities, the Kansas equine industry has no means of self-funding. Beef, dairy cattle, swine, wheat, soybeans, corn, sunflowers, chickens and the propane industry have some sort of check-off or assessment to promote and sustain their industry. Currently four other states (Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, and Virginia) have similar programs in place. We have modeled the K.E.E.P. program following their example.

Kansans are strong, hard-working and self-sufficient. They also know when to work together to get things done for the good of everyone involved. We will do the heavy lifting, but we need you, our elected State Senators, to help create the framework. By supporting S.B. 87 you will have a positive impact on the future of the horse in Kansas and on the thousands of Kansas horse owners who enjoy their partnerships with these incredible animals.

With me today are people that represent the horse industry, including breed associations, horse owners, business owners, trail organizations and others. They offer their full support of the KEEP program.

The Kansas Horse Council asks the Committee to recommend that SB 87 be submitted to the full Senate for passage. At this time I would entertain questions from the Committee.