

February 13, 2018
Testimony for HB2726
Chris Brunin

Chairman Sloan and members of the committee: My name is Chris Brunin and I am submitting this written testimony in support of HB2726.

The proposed bill, House Bill 2726, has potential to be very positive and impactful, especially for counties in central and western Kansas that have been desperately looking for alternatives to water crises they have dealt with for generations. We can not only help fix the water issues in these areas, but help people generate more revenue for their families and their state.

As stated in the bill, crops such as hyssop, millet, sugar beets, sweet potatoes, multiple types of ancient grains, flowering plants and herbs like lavender, thyme, and salvia are just a few examples of commodities that require significantly lower amounts of water compared to corn, soybean or cotton and they grow well in Kansas.

I was born and raised on a farm in Wabaunsee County, and other members of our family have farm land next to ours. It has always been very expensive to irrigate, spray round-up and fertilize a field. It seems like when crop prices rise so do the prices of fuel and fertilizer, which makes it always hard for the farmer to get ahead. Kansas farmers are the backbone of our economy.

Monocrops are not the way to a sustainable future, and they could seal the fate of numerous small family farms in Kansas as they have been in decline for decades. We notice a lot of the nutrients getting removed from the soil with corn and it adds basically nothing back to the soil. A lot of farmers alternate from corn to soy beans, year after year, because of the nitrogen that beans add back to the soil. Farmer have to use heavy pesticides, herbicides and a lot of water to grow the modern-day Kansas crops. What we have seen recently is that some of the weeds we are coming across in the fields are so resilient to modern-day chemicals that they can't be killed.

I went to school at Haskell Indian Nations University and learned that most of the traditional crops grown by Native Americans didn't need much water to grow. We need to conserve our water supply the best we can and there are options that we can take advantage of. I think it's wise that we take a look back at the beginning of our great nation to see what the founder fathers grew to help build America into an industrial power, Industrial Hemp.

Industrial Hemp is an alternative crop we can invest in and do research on that uses one-third of the water that corn does. While at the same time not requiring any herbicides or pesticides to grow, this plant is very resilient. Farmers can spend a fortune spraying and watering crops just to have one storm ruin the entire yield. Industrial Hemp is extremely resilient and extremely easy to maintain. Through phytoremediation Industrial Hemp actually cleans up all of the remaining pesticides and toxins that have been in the soil for years. Civilizations throughout humanity's agricultural evolution have cultivated the drought-resistant and beneficial plant known as Industrial Hemp for multiple purposes. Thanks to technology and modern science, it can now be used for over 50,000 products. I am also in great support of HB2182 allowing this alternative crop to be grown here in Kansas in compliance with section 7606 of the 2014 farm bill.

As a Kansan who runs a business that sells supplements derived from federally-approved industrial hemp, I have seen firsthand the large economic benefit and return on investment a grant program like this can bring to the state. I have worked with companies in other states that process Industrial Hemp for seed, fuel, food and medicinal extracts. Farms that have less quality soil in states like in Oregon or Kentucky, can receive anywhere from \$5000 to \$40000 an acre depending on quality of the Industrial Hemp. Those numbers per acre are unheard of to Kansas farmers. Their input costs will also drop with needing less water and no pesticides. To empower the farmer again in this way would bring Kansas great amounts of tax revenue and environmental success. Being in the middle of the country also give us a very favorable advantage.

The money allocated to help farmers and communities incorporate water conservation efforts into their daily practices will be put to good use by helping get a hemp pilot program off the ground that includes farmers. Kansas would do it better than states like Wisconsin and Virginia have. In 1863 Kansas led the nation bushels per acre for Industrial Hemp.

It should be the intent of Kansas lawmakers to not just allow farmers to participate in building our economy and make our communities sustainable, but bills like 2726 go the extra steps and help get resources to those who can help jumpstart our efforts to be sustainable, responsible stewards of resource and also be at the forefront of the new research and innovation it takes to be leading producers in any industry.

I think it would be wise to allocate 10-15% of the \$50 million for the low-water-use crop grant fund, to help jumpstart this industry that generates over \$650 million in the United States, here in Kansas. Most of that amount is imported from other countries.

I am in support of HB2726, and I think that we need to focus in on what would give our state the greatest return on investment, Industrial Hemp.

I want to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit my written testimony in support of HB2726 and ask that this committee pass HB2726 favorably. I would also like to add that Kansas is always going to be home for me. I think this is the best state in the country and I want my future farm to be planted with a sustainable alternative crop, and have the ability to make a prosperous living growing Industrial Hemp. If you have any questions or want to talk to me personally my contact info is below and please do not hesitate to contact me.

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