



Testimony Before
The Senate Agriculture Committee
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In Support Of SB405

Submitted By:
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to submit testimony in support of SB405 and to share with you my region's overwhelming support for ag-related economic development, specifically, poultry production.

CloudCorp is Cloud County's Economic Development agency. Our 25-member board has representation from every community in our county and we regularly work and partner with development agencies throughout North Central Kansas.

Our organization's mission is to facilitate economic development opportunities for the county. We strive to focus our efforts on realistic endeavors that complement our economy, 61% of which is comprised of agriculture. Our surrounding counties are similar in economic makeup.

Cloud County and the region known as the 81 Corridor in North Central Kansas recently had the opportunity to consider a newer value-added ag business: poultry growing. The only reason we were able to consider this new opportunity is because of the work of the Kansas Department of Agriculture.

Of course, processing is nothing new to the state of Kansas but large-scale poultry growing is. The Kansas Department of Agriculture recognized that our surrounding states to the North, South, and East were experiencing growth in poultry but Kansas was left out. Chicken is expected to be the most widely consumed protein by 2020 and production needs to double by 2050 to keep up with demand. KDA did not want Kansas to lose out on this opportunity and started working to change that. KDA learned that the first step to opening up our state to this type of production would be to join the Poultry Federation. Because of this strategic move by Secretary McClaskey and staff, the doors started to open for poultry production in the state.

Our region in North Central Kansas quickly mobilized to try and recruit poultry growing and I feel you will benefit from hearing our story. We realized that we needed to do three things. First, we needed a suitable site with the appropriate infrastructure for both the processing facility and the community growth. Second, we needed to communicate with farmers in the region to determine



if there was enough interest to support a growers network. And finally, we needed to educate ourselves and our citizens about poultry growing.

We quickly found a more than suitable site for the processing facility in Concordia. We then began working with local Farm Bureau groups, K-State Extension, and area farmers to determine interest. Immediately, area farmers were interested in having another end user to sell grain to. North Central Kansas has some of the lowest prices for corn in the state. We need better prices and additional end users can help with that. But ultimately, we needed to prove we had enough interest in the actual growing of chickens in order to be a suitable location. We brought in K-State Professor Dr. Beyer to hold three informational meetings about poultry growing. These meetings were attended by over 200 area farmers. From that group, we had commitments to put up over 130 barns within thirty miles. The strong interest stems from the opportunity to diversify during tough economic times and the added bonus of the nutrient-rich chicken fertilizer for their row crops.

Finally, we needed to truly educate ourselves and our public about poultry growing and the actual processing facility itself. Our board decided that we needed to be as open and forthcoming with information as possible and we needed to be swift in our communication. We learned a lot from watching other locations and determined the best way to gain support for our venture was to make sure our public was informed every step of the way. To do this, we formed a special recruitment committee consisting of our school officials, college officials, religious organizations, ag industry experts, a city commissioner, a county commissioner, Republic County Economic Development, Salina Economic Development, and producers. This group gathered data for the entire region and they helped with educating the community. We shared a Fact of the Day on Facebook where people could email with questions and we'd post the answer online. I was available to speak to every civic organization and social club in the region about recruiting a poultry facility. Our committee members did segments on the radio to talk about the impact of a poultry facility and growing network in our region. They discussed not only the economic impact, but the social impacts as well.

Through this entire process we realized that a large poultry growing network and processing facility would certainly have its challenges, but it would ultimately be key to helping us sustain our rural communities in the future. Do we have 100% consensus? Of course not. There are always a handful of folks who oppose changes to a community. But what we have discovered is broad-based support like I have never seen for a project. It became clear to CloudCorp that an integrated poultry operation would be a great fit for our region and we are determined to bring it to fruition.

SB405 is another piece of the puzzle to bringing chicken production to the state. Decreasing the setbacks for dry-liter operations allows for a robust poultry growing network. The minute this becomes statute, you will be putting an open sign at our borders. Please allow us to take part in that growth. Please give us the tools we need to bring in agriculture economic development in rural America. It is my hope that the state will continue to support these and other efforts to grow agriculture in Kansas.