

COUNTY WEED DIRECTOR'S ASSOCIATION OF KANSAS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

RE: HB 2583 – An act relating to noxious weeds.

March 16, 2018

Topeka, Kansas

Presented by:

Kenny Baccus, President

County Weed Directors Association of Kansas

Chairperson Kerschen and members of the Committee:

My name is Kenny Baccus. I am the President of the County Weed Director's Association of Kansas (CWDAK) and director of the Ottawa County Noxious Weed Department. We appreciate the opportunity to express our stance on House Bill 2583.

House Bill 2583, introduced by the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA), makes several changes to the noxious weed law.

Changing the way invasive weeds are declared noxious from legislative action to regulation under the secretary of agriculture could allow invasive weeds to be dealt with in a timelier manor. House Bill 2583 allows the secretary of agriculture to declare a weed noxious with an emergency declaration of up to 18 months so that action to contain or eradicate the weed can be taken and cost-share chemicals can be used. Our association currently supports noxious weeds as declared by Legislative action but are open to cooperating with a weed advisory committee and recommendations to the secretary of agriculture.

Our association supports the formation of a state noxious weed advisory committee, of which our association would have two members, for the purpose of studying the economic impact of invasive weeds on Kansas agriculture and the need to declare them noxious. The

committee, made up of weed experts, would make recommendations through the use of a risk assessment management tool as to the designation and classification of state noxious weeds. However, if this list of committee members grows to a substantial number above the 11 that are selected, our association will not be in support of the legislation.

House Bill 2583 allows flexibility for county commissioners to fund their noxious weed programs within their county. House Bill 2583 allows funding through a tax levy for a noxious weed eradication fund or funding their noxious weed program through the general fund. Our association supports this language which allows county commissioners to fund their individual programs in which ever manor best fits their overall county budget.

CWDAK supports making changes as to how we collect unpaid accounts either from having served a legal notice for treatment or from an unpaid chemical sale. Currently we can only collect an amount equal to 10% of the assessed valuation of the property per year. This can take several years in many situations to collect the entire bill and the county essentially becomes a financial lender to the landowner. House Bill 2583 would eliminate the 10% and allow the counties to reimburse as to see fit. House Bill 2583 also allows the landowner to request the county commission work with them to develop a payment plan so as to not cause a hardship to a landowner but puts the responsibility for noxious weed control on the landowner.

CWDAK does not support the removal of the cost share program. The current Kansas Noxious Weed Law and its cost share was an incentive for the counties to get cooperation on noxious weed issues.

Our association appreciates this opportunity to express our neutral stance of House Bill 2583.

Thank You.