

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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EILEEN HORN
10TH DISTRICT

Proponent Testimony: HB 2401

January 23, 2020

Dear Chairman Barker and members of the Federal and State Affairs Committee:

I stand before you to testify **in support** of house bill 2401. As you've heard, HB 2401 will remove an onerous quorum requirement that currently limits the ability of certain corporations.

Here's why I think this is important: In our Rural Revitalization committee, we have had several informational hearings on the challenges of food access and declining grocery stores across the state. The loss of a rural grocery store threatens the health of local citizens and the very existence of rural communities. Rural grocery stores are:

- an anchor business in rural communities,
- a primary source of local jobs,
- a significant source of local sales tax,
- a community gathering space, and
- often residents' only source of healthy food.

Unfortunately, since 2008, **105 grocery stores in rural Kansas have closed their doors** and in 50% of those communities a new store has not re-opened. As we heard in the Rural Revitalization committee, the grocery industry is challenging in small communities for many reasons – narrow grocery margins, declining population of shoppers, competition with Wal-Mart, Dollar General, etc. It becomes difficult or impossible for rural communities to attract a private grocery operator to open a store.

In a few Kansas communities, creating a grocery cooperative has proven to be an innovative solution to meet the community's food needs. Most recently, in 2018 the Marmaton Cooperative was created in Moran, KS to convert a struggling grocery store into a community food cooperative.

This past September, the Kansas Cooperative Council convened representatives from the known four cooperative groceries in Kansas, including Marmaton and the Merc, along with legislators, and representatives from K-State. Representatives from both the Merc and Marmaton shared their challenges in complying with the quorum requirement during their annual meetings.

Given the need to improve healthy food access in rural Kansas, I think we should do what we can to remove unnecessary barriers that hamper communities' efforts to create solutions to their food access needs.

I would encourage your passage of house bill 2401 to support our current Kansas grocery cooperatives, and to remove barriers for future community grocery projects that may arise in our Kansas communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eileen Horn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E" and a distinct "H".

Eileen Horn, State Representative, 10th District