

**To: Senate Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, Senator Kerschen, Chairman**

**From: Kent Askren, Public Policy Director for Kansas Farm Bureau**

**Date: March 14, 2022**

**Re: Testimony in opposition to SB 549**

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Chairman Kerschen and members of the Committee, on behalf of Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB) I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 549. KFB is the state's largest general farm organization representing more than 30,000 farm and ranch families through our 105 county Farm Bureau associations.

SB 549 proposes to isolate the benefits of Groundwater Management Districts and their statutorily directed purposes to *only* irrigation use, one of 14 distinct beneficial uses of water recognized in our water regulations. While irrigation is the largest volume water user, there are no political lines that water follows, and it should not be managed that way either. All water users need the management and protections conceptualized in the GMD Act.

To provide an "opt out" for all non-irrigation users will cause considerable challenges in not only, and most importantly, managing the resource but in operation of the district. Definitions like "water user" currently in statute includes any person withdrawing or using groundwater within the district. Management programs should be designed to recognize all these distinct uses collectively, otherwise the management program becomes a futile effort, and the resource is in further jeopardy.

Without all water users participating, GMD rules and management will be arbitrarily applied to certain water users while their neighbors who are utilizing the same natural resource but excluded. It would be difficult if not impossible to implement a management program that's good for the benefit of all if this bill becomes law.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 549 and would be happy to address any questions at the appropriate time.