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Testimony on Senate Bill 549  
Senate Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Jon Quinday, City Manager  
City of Russell, Kansas

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Chairman Kerschen and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB549, which allows non-irrigation water right owners to withdraw from a groundwater management district.

Following an extensive and exhaustive search over three decades and including dozens of studies involving water across much of western Kansas to determine a suitable source of supply of water, the R9 Ranch represents the best and most sustainable source for both cities.

Russell and Hays voluntarily agreed to reduce our legally available 6,756 acre-feet of water to a ten-year rolling average of 4,800 acre-feet – going above and beyond what is required by law to ensure long-term sustainability. To put that into perspective, the 4,800 acre feet per year represents three percent of total water use in Edwards County.

Rather than commend Russell and Hays for their conservancy efforts, the GMD #5 board voted to recommend the cities be subject to further reductions, not based on statute or regulation. Yet, requests of irrigators to waive regulations are routinely approved by the GMD Board, in contrast to the arbitrary standards they attempted to impose on Hays and Russell.

Absent Groundwater Management Districts applying the rules and regulations uniformly to all water right holders, their oversight and input role should be limited, and non-irrigation water rights should have the ability to opt-out of the GMD.

Thank you for this opportunity to support SB 549.