KANSAS LAND TRUST

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To: House Committee on Local Government
From: Kaitlin Stanley, Executive Director of the Kansas Land Trust
Date: February 7, 2025
RE: HB2363

Chairman Rep. Emil Bergquist and Members of the Committee on Local Government,

On behalf of the Kansas Land Trust, I offer testimony in opposition to House Bill 2363. The Kansas Land Trust (KLT) is a private, non-profit organization, working with Kansas landowners who voluntarily come to us as a partner to conserve their land and protect its ecological, agricultural, recreational, scenic, or cultural value.

The tool we use to fulfill a Kansas landowner's wish is a voluntary conservation agreement, also known as a conservation easement, as authorized by K.S.A. 58-3810 et seq. These agreements are made between KLT and a landowner. The right to own land in America comes with a "bundle of rights." In a conservation easement, a landowner voluntarily gives or sells one or more of these rights to KLT, ultimately protecting the aforementioned values of the land for the benefit of future generations.

The Kansas Land Trust's members, staff, and Board of Directors are strong believers in private property rights. Conservation easements are one way that property owners can exercise their rights, including the right to preserve the unique qualities of their land.

The KLT works with many partners who support conservation easements including the Kansas Forest Service, Fort Riley, Natural Resources Conservation Services, Ducks Unlimited, and Douglas County. For example, we partner with Fort Riley to protect family-owned ranches in the Flint Hills while supporting America's national security. Voluntary conservation easements provide a buffer around the Fort Riley installation, allowing the military to conduct training activities on the base without encroaching on adjoining landowners' rights, and providing landowners peace of mind that their working lands will remain in working hands.

Conservation easements also provide important benefits to the public. Conservation easements protect important natural resources, such as high-quality soils and clean water. Placing a perpetual conservation easement on farmland or ranchland helps ensure the land remains in production, stabilizing rural communities. Protecting agricultural land

supports local food systems and provides food security for our state and our nation. Perpetual conservation easements benefit future generations by giving young people who intend to farm or ranch the land the opportunity to purchase it at a lower cost.

HB 2363 imposes unnecessary government bureaucracy on landowners' right to use their land as they see fit.

The Kansas Land Trust strongly opposes HB2363.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comment on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Kaitlin Stanley