

January 21, 2024

To: Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

From: Sheila Sumpter, Olathe, Kansas

RE: HOUSE BILL No. 2541

My purpose in this memo is to express concern regarding HB-2541 and the subsequent repercussions that may affect the people of the State of Kansas.

Of primary concern is that this bill was introduced and scheduled for hearing in less than two business days. There is no time for review, investigation, and due process. Related concerns are that the proponents of the bill, members of Kansans for Conservation, appear to be the types of entities eligible for applying for the grants.

I encourage you to ask these questions:

Who benefits from these funding sources?

Who pays for these funds?

Who is at risk to lose revenue, livelihood, and legacy rights should these funds and appropriations be established?

Are there definitions of “industry members and stakeholders” to adopt regulations? Are there guidelines that will direct the secretary to appoint the members of an external review panel?

Why are property owners and private businesses exempt from eligibility to apply for funding?

What is the State obligation to the Federal government regarding the matching funds? Who reviews those restrictions? Who oversees those contracts? Are there similar bills introduced or passed in other states?

What was their experience with the process and implementation? (If implemented, what time frame to gather data on efficacy?)

What if these conservation practices are already in place?

How much land will be acquired through this appropriation? Are there restrictions on acreage, balance of type (ranch, farm, forestry)? Are there measures in place to determine acceptable practices of acquiring land from private ownership?

With working lands removed from the Kansas GDP, who will make up for lost state revenue?

Whose budgets will be restricted due to the higher prices of food and building products when fewer acres are in production?

When funding is provided by removing funds from one budget to another, who makes up for the loss of funds in the original budget?

Do we need more outdoor education sites? Will they meet the guidelines for conservation, or will they be built up with structures, paved roads and paths, utilities, and landscaping?

Who determines the relevancy of outdoor education? Is it local entities that know the land, the habitat, the interrelationship of land, people, and elements?