



STATE ASSOCIATION  
OF KANSAS WATERSHEDS



**To: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chair**

**From: Olivia Bergmeier, State Association of Kansas Watersheds executive director**

**Date: January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024**

**RE: HB 2541 – Establishing a state conservation fund**

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Chairman Rahjes and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2541. The State Association of Kansas Watersheds, SAKW, is a grassroots organization based in conservation. Since 1953, watersheds across Kansas provide valuable services to their environments, neighbors and state as a whole. We are members of the Kansans for Conservation coalition which has led the collaborative drafting process of HB 254.

Conservation is the proper management of our natural resources and there are few investments more critical to the quality of life in Kansas. Our economic success, public health, and future generations are dependent upon us maintaining and improving these resources. Currently, the state does not provide the proper funding for this work and is subsequently losing out on federal or private matching dollars to the 35 states that have already established dedicated conservation funding, including all four of our neighbors.

Every day, Kansans work toward stewardship of the land and best practices for future generations. With thousands of watershed structures, our members work diligently to provide safe and operable dams and other flood prevention structures. Having a state fund dedicated to water conservation would help our organization perform important updates to large structures, some of which are in desperate need of repair.

As outlined above and by our fellow coalition members, the establishment of state conservation funding benefits all Kansans, allows for the proper stewardship of the resources bestowed upon us, and enables the state to be competitive for match opportunities. Therefore, we ask you to support HB 2541.