

Date: February 1, 2024

Re: HB 2607- Oral Proponent

To: House Agriculture and Natural Resources, Chairman Rahjes

From: Claudia Hissong, Kansas Farm Bureau

Chairman Rahjes and members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 2607. My name is Claudia Hissong, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB) members. 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.

HB 2607 is a result of EPA updating the Certification of Pesticide Applicators regulations to set stronger standards for those who apply restricted use pesticides. We appreciate the Kansas Department of Agriculture's (KDA) work in updating and submitting plans to certify applicators under these updated standards. It is of utmost importance to maintain state primacy, and we value KDA's efforts to comply with EPA guidelines while keeping this standard.

While KFB is supportive of this bill due to the necessity of its passing to remain in compliance, there are a few points of concern. The first being removing a private applicators ability to provide services on another individual's land through the trading of services between producers. There are many benefits to allowing producers to barter services. For example, one producer may invest in chemical application equipment and by spreading those costs over more acres through barter agreements with fellow producers we make beneficial technologies more cost efficient. Eliminating the ability for producers to barter services, some producers may experience delayed services from commercial applicators resulting in less effective herbicide or pest control, increased likelihood of herbicide resistance weed populations, lower yields and overall less farm profit.

Additionally, under HB 2607 private applicators are not authorized to use aerial application. This could raise issues in the future as unmanned aerial system application continues to grow rapidly in popularity, feasibility, and efficacy. The bill does allow private applicators to obtain a commercial applicator certification for aerial application through additional training and testing. However, once producers complete these additional requirements they can still only apply on their land. If a producer goes through comparable certification as a commercial applicator, they should be able to apply on others' land in return for services or have less onerous testing or fees.

We would request that the committee consider removing both of these unnecessary restrictions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2607. HB 2607 contains provisions that are necessary for the state of Kansas to comply with EPA standards and keep state primacy and we request it's passage once our concerns are addressed.