



KANSAS RURAL CENTER

FOR THE HEALTH OF THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

KANSAS RURAL CENTER

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Proponent
Testimony on HB 2564

Dear Chairman Rahjes and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources:

I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony on HB 2564. The Kansas Rural Center has been working to build an economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially just farming and food system for Kansans for 45 years. KRC believes that diversified farming systems hold the key to preserving, developing and maintaining a food and farming future that provides healthy food, a healthy environment and social structure, and meaningful livelihoods. Our work has focused on supporting farmers and communities as they create local food systems around the state of Kansas.

The value of strong, local food supply chains was highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which weakened long distance and international food supply chains and left many areas of Kansas without adequate access to fresh food. HB 2564 provides a key tool to help strengthen local food systems by supporting wholesale purchasing by Kansas' food banks. The farm to food bank program created by HB 2564 not only increases the access of those food banks to locally produced food, but it also provides a market for local farmers to develop the wholesale part of their farm operations. Many small-scale farmers start out with direct-to-consumer sales, either via a local farmers market, a farm stand or an online platform that connects them directly to their customers. To develop robust local and regional food systems across the state of Kansas, we need to support those farmers as they move into wholesale marketing channels, the so-called mid-tiered markets, such as restaurants, grocery stores and schools. The program created by HB 2564 provides a great tool to support farmers working to move into wholesale production. The early success of the similar Federal program the Local Food Procurement Act, shows that HB 2564 can help local food systems develop.

Thank you to members of the committee for your consideration and we ask that you pass HB 2564 out of committee.

Sincerely,
Tom Buller
Kansas Rural Center
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