



Since 1894

Date: February 8, 2024

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

From: Taylor Nikkel, Director of the Stockgrowers Division, Kansas Livestock Association

Re: **HB 2543 AN ACT concerning agriculture; relating to livestock marks and brands; requiring approval of livestock brand applications by the animal health commissioner; submission of brand application and registration fees; increasing the maximum amount for brand registration and renewal fees; amending K.S.A 47-417 and repealing the existing section.**

Position: Proponent, In-Person

The Kansas Livestock Association (KLA), formed in 1894, is a trade association representing more than 5,700 members on legislative and regulatory issues. KLA members are involved in many aspects of the livestock industry, including seed stock, cow-calf, and stocker cattle production; cattle feeding; dairy production; swine production; grazing land management; and diversified farming operations.

Thank you, Chairman Rahjes and members of the Committee, for allowing the Kansas Livestock Association (KLA) the opportunity to share our views on HB 2543. KLA stands in support of HB 2543, as a means for the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) to raise brand registration fees and charge a brand application fee to adequately fund the brand fee fund.

While KLA does not have direct policy on this issue, KLA staff consulted with its Stockgrowers Executive Committee, made up of volunteer leaders of the cow/calf and stocker cattle segments of the industry. This group of KLA leaders voted in favor of supporting HB 2543. KLA is supportive of the KDA's effort to fully utilize the brand fee fund to fund a staff position to administer the livestock brands program as well as the state's two livestock theft investigators. The livestock theft investigators have been crucial in helping producers recover stolen livestock and charge the criminals who perpetrated the thefts. In times of higher cattle prices, like the industry is currently experiencing, thefts tend to increase, posing a threat to operations across the state.

While Kansas is not a mandatory brand inspection state, KDA's Brand Program is still important to producers across the state. It allows them to register a brand that can be applied to their cattle and remain with that animal throughout its lifetime. Cattle carrying a brand more easily allow identification of current and past owners of the livestock. Brands also aid law enforcement in solving theft cases and help animal health officials trace and control disease

outbreaks. While no one likes an increase in fees, KLA believes the fee authority contained in HB 2543 is important to ensure KDA can maintain a robust and effective brands program.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit KLA's views to the Committee. KLA asks the Committee to approve HB 2543 favorably for passage.