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To: House Committee on Water, Representative Jim Minnix, Chairman

From: Kent Askren, Public Policy Director for Kansas Farm Bureau

Date: February 13, 2024

Re: Written testimony in opposition to HB 2696

Chairman Minnix and members of the Committee, on behalf of Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB) I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to HB 2696. 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.

KFB policy support both the Kansas Water Appropriation Act and Groundwater Management District Act. Each act clearly defines the role of both the state and local involvement in the proper enforcement and management of groundwater resources.

It is imperative that collaboration and communication between the agency and districts exists in helping to address our groundwater challenges. KFB called a meeting between KDA and all the GMD's a few years ago to enhance communication, respect, and trust in achieving the mission statutorily given to each. This bill takes us in the opposite direction.

HB 2696 would diminish the role of local water users in making recommendations and review of Water Conservation Area proposals which typically give ***flexibilities otherwise not allowed*** under the Kansas Water Appropriation Act or fit well with GMD management programs.

We strongly encourage the committee to build upon the excellent work of HB 2279 to open communication and understanding of the challenges and efforts to address our groundwater issues rather than stifle it.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and we ask that the committee reject and not pass out HB 2696.