



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

From: Troy Dumler, Sr. Vice President/Gen. Manager of The Garden City Company

Date: February 13, 2024

Re: HB 2696 – Allowing a groundwater management district the opportunity to provide a written comment rather than a recommendation to the chief engineer for a proposed water conservation area and management plan.

Position: Proponent, Written

Chairman Minnix and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to write in support of HB 2696. I currently serve as Senior Vice President/General Manager of The Garden City Company, an agricultural landholding company founded in 1905. Currently, 14 families farm land owned by the Company in Finney and Kearny County.

Like many landowners in southwest Kansas, The Garden City Company has experienced significant declines in groundwater levels over the last few decades. In 2017 the company established its first water conservation area (WCA). The company has successfully met its water conservation goals in two separate WCAs, and is working with the Garden City Field Office of the Division of Water Resources to combine these WCAs into a single new management plan. As one of the larger water right owners in southwest Kansas, developing a WCA is a more involved process. I believe the minor adjustment HB 2696 makes to the WCA law is a common-sense approach to streamline the WCA process.

Water conservation areas are voluntary agreements between the water right owner and the chief engineer, and must adhere to the rules outlined in K.S.A. 82a-745. They are good tools because they offer water right owners the opportunity to formally customize water conservation plans to their unique circumstances, but still achieve documented conservation. HB 2696 allows groundwater management districts to provide input on proposed water conservation areas without potentially adding an additional layer of bureaucracy and complexity to a voluntary agreement between the chief engineer and water right owner.