



Date: January 5, 2025  
To: Chairman Ken Rahjes, House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources  
From: Shahira Stafford, Kansas Cooperative Council  
**RE: Neutral Written Testimony on HB 2111**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing the Kansas Cooperative Council (Co-op Council) to comment on House Bill 2111, which proposes several modifications to the Kansas Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

Formed in 1944, the Co-op Council represents cooperative businesses across multiple sectors throughout Kansas, including agricultural cooperatives that serve thousands of Kansas farmers. Our purpose is to further the understanding of cooperative principals, methods of doing business, and the impact co-ops have on our state's rural economy. Kansas co-ops have over 575 locations, employ over 5,000 people, and represent over 116,000 members.

HB 2111 introduces changes to the CREP program, including increasing the maximum total enrolled acreage from 40,000 to 60,000 acres and establishing new eligibility criteria for water rights. While we appreciate the bill's intent to enhance water conservation efforts in Kansas, we maintain a neutral position on this legislation.

Our organization has historically expressed concerns about CREP programs that focus solely on irrigation reduction. We are encouraged to see that this legislation includes provisions for dryland farming and limited irrigation practices when pursuing water quantity goals, which aligns more closely with our vision for effective water conservation.

However, we believe the proposed 25% county-level enrollment cap (15,000 acres under the new total acreage limit) could potentially concentrate too much retired acreage in a single county. We would respectfully suggest amending the bill to cap county enrollment at 12,000 acres, which would help distribute the program's impact more evenly across participating regions. Other conferees have also suggested such a change.

The Co-op Council continues to advocate for water conservation programs that balance environmental stewardship with maintaining viable agricultural production; and we appreciate the committee's consideration of our perspective on this matter.