



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

**From: Laura Downey, Executive Director, Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE)**

**Date: February 6 th , 2025**

**RE: HB 2063 – Establishing a state conservation fund**

Chairman Rahjes and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2063.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of HB 2063.

Since 1969, the Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE) has been a leader in advancing environmental literacy and conservation in our state. As one of the first and largest conservation and environmental education organizations in the nation, we are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit committed to non-biased, science-based education that ensures every Kansan has a seat at the table. Our network includes more than 700 organizations, businesses, agencies, and schools, as well as 350 dedicated individuals. At the heart of our mission is professional development for educators—impacting more than 25,000 teachers and an estimated 350,000 Kansas students since 1970. Through programs like the Kansas Green Schools Network, which engages 478 schools and 19 school districts, we empower students to take the lead in creating greener, healthier schools and communities.

Investing in conservation is investing in Kansas. The health of our economy, our communities, and future generations depends on protecting and enhancing our natural resources. Conservation funding not only supports critical, on-the-ground projects but also unlocks federal matching funds that Kansas is currently leaving on the table. More than that, it shapes the next generation—ensuring that young Kansans grow up connected to the land, equipped with the knowledge and skills to be responsible stewards of our state’s natural assets.

For KACEE and for conservation and environmental education across Kansas, this funding would be transformative. It would:

- Expand professional development opportunities for teachers, equipping them with the tools to engage students in hands-on, real-world learning about our environment.
- Provide critical funding for schools to take students on field trips, immersing them in the unique ecological features of our state.
- Strengthen the Kansas Green Schools program, empowering students to investigate, problem-solve, and lead sustainability initiatives in their own schools.



- Support vital education programs that serve large geographic areas—many of which operate with just one staff member—so that more students can benefit from high-quality conservation education.

HB 2063 is more than a funding mechanism—it is a commitment to the long-term health, prosperity, and sustainability of Kansas. By passing this bill, you are not only securing essential conservation funding but also ensuring that future generations of Kansans grow up valuing and actively participating in the stewardship of our land, water, and natural resources.

For these reasons, and in alignment with our fellow coalition members, we urge your support of HB 2063.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Submitted by Laura Downey, on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE)