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

From: Kaitlin Stanley, Executive Director of the Kansas Land Trust

Date: February 6, 2025

RE: HB2063 – Establishing a state conservation fund

Chairman Rahjes and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB2063. The Kansas Land Trust works with landowners to develop voluntary conservation agreements that protect lands of ecological, cultural, recreational, and agricultural lands for future generations. We are members of the Kansans for Conservation coalition which has led the collaborative drafting process of HB2063.

Conservation is the proper management of our natural resources and there are few investments more critical to the quality of life in Kansas. Our economic success, public health, and future generations are dependent upon us maintaining and improving these resources. Currently, the state is failing to provide the proper funding for this work and is subsequently losing out on federal or private matching dollars to the 35 states that have already established dedicated conservation funding, including all four of our neighbors.

The Kansas Land Trust permanently protects land by working with landowners to create voluntary agreements that uphold the conservation values of their property. Since 1991, KLT has protected 82 properties, covering more than 40,000 acres including rangeland, native prairie, streambanks, lands with public access, and prime farmland. Relying on support from donor contributions and grants, KLT accomplishes a great deal with limited resources, ensuring special places are protected for future Kansans. Yet there are far more lands to protect than our resource pool allows. As an accredited land trust, we work closely with partners in our region who demonstrate the incredible cohesive public benefits made possible by state funding support. Without the reliable and sustainable support of state conservation funding, the destruction of places that make Kansas so special is inevitable.

We are eager to participate in the opportunities that HB2063 will create for conservation across Kansas. As outlined above and by our fellow coalition members, the establishment of state conservation funding benefits all Kansans, allows for the proper stewardship of the resources bestowed upon us, and enables the state to be competitive for match opportunities. Therefore, we ask you to support HB2063.
