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House of Representatives

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Joe Seiwert  
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Chairperson and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB 2297, a bill that aims to regulate raccoon ownership in Kansas.

As an advocate for responsible pet ownership, I strongly believe that this bill strikes an essential balance between allowing individuals freedom to keep raccoons as pets while ensuring their health and safety, as well as the well-being of the community.

Raccoons are intelligent, curious, and adaptable creatures, and when cared for responsibly, they can make unique pets. However, like any exotic animal, they require specific care, proper housing, and regular veterinary check-ups to ensure their health and prevent the spread of diseases like rabies. This bill's requirement for vaccinations, annual vet checkups, and education programs will help ensure that raccoon owners understand the responsibilities involved in keeping such a pet. The bill also sets minimum standards for enclosures, ensuring raccoons are housed in safe and secure environments. Additionally, it establishes clear regulations on breeding, prohibiting unlicensed breeding and requiring connections to federally licensed breeders. All of these provisions ensure that raccoons are properly cared for and prevent irresponsible ownership.

Kansas is not alone in regulating raccoon ownership. In fact, several other states such as Florida and Texas have successfully implemented similar programs, and they have become models for how we can manage raccoon ownership responsibly. The common thread among these states is that each requires a permit for ownership, along with mandatory training and education for the owner. These regulations ensure that owners are well-informed and capable of providing the proper care, while also ensuring that the raccoon receives the attention and environment it needs to thrive—key elements that are also included in this bill.

In conclusion, HB 2297 is a responsible approach to regulating raccoon ownership in Kansas. It ensures that raccoons are properly cared for, educates owners on the responsibilities involved, and establishes safeguards to prevent the improper breeding or mistreatment of these animals. By

following the example of other states that have successfully regulated raccoon ownership, we can create a model program that benefits both pet owners and the broader community. This bill offers a commonsense solution that protects both human and animal health, and I strongly urge the committee to support its passage.

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Joseph Seiwert

*Kansas House of Representatives*