

James Fisher
Kansas Fairgrounds Foundation
PO Box 1861, Hutchinson, KS 67504-1861
James.Fisher@KsFgF.org 620-615-7388

House Bill No. 2103

Proponent

January 30, 2025

Good afternoon and thank you chairwoman Estes and committee. I am James Fisher; I currently serve as the Executive Director for the Kansas Fairgrounds Foundation. However, I come to you today speaking from nearly four decades of experience of working with students involved in the 4-H, FFA and other youth programs across this great country.

I grew up very involved and as an active member in both 4-H & FFA. My education and career path were directly inspired by my involvement in these organizations, competing in local, regional, state and national competitions and serving in leadership positions at every level along the way.

For 18 years, I served as the Director of Junior Activities of the American Angus Association, the largest beef breed organization with the largest youth membership of any beef breed organization in the world. In addition, I served as the Chief Development Officer for Communities in Schools Dallas Region, where we provided direct services to tens of thousands of high-risk students as well as ancillary support to hundreds of thousands of students across nine independent school districts in the Dallas metroplex area.

What I learned working with students at all levels – those involved in the Angus, 4-H and FFA programs whose parents were very involved as well as those students in the Dallas Independent School District who had very little to no family support, is that when you allow a student to experience events, activities, contests and competitions, building their life skills, and getting them outside of their neighborhood or home town – their world becomes bigger and their ability to comprehend the opportunities available to them expands greatly. These students recognize more of what opportunities are available for them because they have experienced it and participated in the events and competitions.

Learn by Doing – is the 4-H slogan – and in 3 small words it tells us – that these “Experiential Learning” experiences provide a depth and breadth of education which cannot be duplicated or created in a classroom setting. It is only through active participation in these “learning experiences” that a student is provided this additional layer of education and understanding. These “learning experiences” help to develop the mind and body of our young people.

I often say, don’t let school get in the way of your education. What I mean by that is that education is very important to the success of the student, but education is multifaceted. Classroom learning is only one part of that education, having the opportunity for experiential learning through participation in “learning experiences” and agricultural science activities is one additional and critical component in providing the best educational opportunities for our students across the state of Kansas.

I encourage you to vote in favor of HB 2103 which provides the language to allow for these types of agricultural experiences to be considered excused absences.

I stand for questions?