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**HB 2103 Allowing Ag Learning Experiences as Valid School Absence  
Written Only Proponent**

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Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Kansas Cooperative Council (Co-op Council), thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on House Bill 2103.

Formed in 1944, the Co-op Council is a trade association representing all forms of cooperatively structured business in Kansas. 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.

Many of our cooperative members actively engage with local schools through internships, job shadowing programs, and agricultural education initiatives like FFA and 4-H. These programs provide invaluable real-world experience that cannot be replicated in a traditional classroom setting. Students gain practical knowledge about grain handling, agronomy, feed manufacturing, precision agriculture technology, and other vital aspects of modern agricultural operations. However, current attendance policies can sometimes create barriers for students wanting to participate in these educational opportunities.

By allowing these activities to be considered valid excuses for absence from school, we can better support students who are developing practical skills that will benefit their future careers in agriculture. This flexibility would particularly benefit students in rural communities where agricultural employment opportunities are abundant but skilled workers are increasingly difficult to find.

Furthermore, this legislation recognizes that agricultural education programs like FFA and 4-H extend beyond the traditional classroom and includes valuable hands-on experiences that contribute to a student's overall education and career readiness. These experiences often teach responsibility, problem-solving, time management, and other essential skills that are highly valued by employers.

The Kansas Cooperative Council strongly supports HB 2103 as a practical solution to support agricultural education and workforce development in rural Kansas. This legislation would help bridge the gap between traditional education and the practical experience needed in modern agriculture.