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Date: February 13, 2025

To: House Committee on Judiciary
Rep. Susan Humphries, Chair

From: Jackie Garagiola, Associate Counsel, Kansas Livestock Association

Re: **HB 2253 AN ACT concerning crimes, punishment and criminal procedure; relating to the theft of property; providing that the violation that theft of livestock or implements of husbandry is severity level 5, nonperson felony; allowing for the forfeiture of property used in the commission of theft of an implement of husbandry.**

Position: Proponent, In-Person

The Kansas Livestock Association (KLA), formed in 1894, is a trade association representing nearly 5,700 members on legislative and regulatory issues. KLA members are involved in many aspects of the livestock industry, including seed stock, cow-calf, and stocker cattle production; cattle feeding; dairy production; swine production; grazing land management; and diversified farming operations.

Thank you, Chair Humphries and members of the Committee, for allowing the Kansas Livestock Association (KLA) the opportunity to share our views on HB 2253. KLA supports HB 2253 as a means to provide further protection for livestock producers from cattle theft.

In Kansas, the livestock theft investigators in the Kansas Attorney General's office have been crucial in helping producers recover stolen livestock and charging the criminals who perpetrated the thefts. In times of higher cattle prices, like the industry is currently experiencing, thefts tend to increase, posing a threat to operations across the state. During conversations between KLA and the attorney general's cattle theft investigators, the theft investigators have noticed it is difficult to incentivize local prosecutors to prosecute cattle theft under the current theft statute and sentencing guidelines. With the increased penalties in HB 2253, prosecutors could more easily pursue jail time, creating a greater deterrent for these crimes.

While theft of property is a lesser priority for many local prosecutors, the Committee should contemplate the ramifications of allowing livestock theft to go unenforced. Unlike theft of property like consumer goods (e.g., televisions, tablets, phones, etc.), theft of cattle directly impacts the livelihoods of farmers and ranchers and their ability to provide for their families. Therefore, KLA believes cattle theft warrants a higher level of severity under the current theft statute.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit KLA's views to the Committee. KLA asks the Committee to approve HB 2253 favorably for passage.