



Date: February 13, 2025

To: Chairwoman Susan Humphries, House Committee on Judiciary

From: Shahira Stafford, Kansas Cooperative Council

RE: Proponent Written Testimony on House Bill 2253 – with requested amendment

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Kansas Cooperative Council (Co-op Council), thank you for allowing us to express our support for House Bill 2253 and *respectfully request consideration of an amendment to include grain theft under its provisions.*

The Co-op Council represents agricultural cooperatives that collect and store millions of bushels of grain for our farmer-owners. While we commend the bill's current focus on livestock theft, we believe including grain under the same enhanced penalties would be reasonable and good public policy.

While grain theft does not occur often, the damage and loss to a cooperative elevator can be drastic. In one series of thefts in 2007, criminals hit at least four grain elevators near Syracuse, Kansas stealing more than \$50,000 worth of raw wheat. At one facility, the Syracuse Co-op's Kendall branch, thieves ultimately stole over 50,000 bushels of grain over several months, with losses exceeding \$450,000 as grain prices rose from \$5 to \$9 per bushel.

Incidents like this demonstrate that grain theft, like livestock theft, has evolved into a sophisticated criminal enterprise requiring specialized equipment and coordinated efforts. The current value-based theft classifications do not adequately address the organized nature of these crimes or their impact on our cooperatives and the farmers we serve.

By including grain theft under this bill's provisions as a severity level 5, nonperson felony, we would better protect our state's ag commodity assets and deter potential thieves. The proposed forfeiture provisions would be particularly effective in grain theft cases, as these crimes typically require vehicles and equipment for transportation. Including grain under these provisions would give law enforcement additional tools to combat these crimes and hold perpetrators accountable.

We respectfully request the committee consider amending HB 2253 to include grain theft under its enhanced penalties and forfeiture provisions. ***This amendment would require minimal changes to the current bill*** while significantly expanding its protective impact for Kansas agriculture.