

CITY OF



133 W 8th St
PO Box 112
Russell KS 67665-0112
Phone: (785) 483-6311
Fax: (785) 483-4397

Testimony in Support of HB 2433
Proponent

Mr. Chair and members of the Committee,

My name is Kayla Schneider, and I serve as the City Manager of the City of Russell. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2433.

HB 2433 is a clarifying measure that affirms counties cannot regulate the appropriation or transfer of water in a way that conflicts with, duplicates, or exceeds state law. This authority correctly belongs to the Chief Engineer and the Water Transfer Hearing Panel.

The process by which Kansas already governs water rights is thorough and should be the final authority on the regulatory process. It is imperative that communities have clarity on this matter to communicate a process that equates to finality.

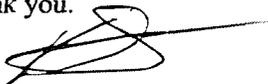
The communities of Russell and Hays have been the model for water conservation across the state for many years. In recent years, even when not in recognized drought status, Russell has implemented water restrictions due to the unreliability of its existing water sources. These existing water sources are not just drought-intolerant, but also susceptible to contamination, such as algae blooms. Russell has had to rely on its wellfield so significantly over the last few years that in 2023 and 2024, additional acre-feet allowances were requested for and approved by the State to provide a needed water supply for the community, even with significant water restrictions in place.

Hays and Russell are significant economic contributors to the region. Russell has faced difficulty in supporting local industry growth due to inadequate water supply. A planned expansion is currently on hold until the necessary water for the project can be secured. This expansion is impactful to the multi-billion-dollar regional economy and supports local employment, grain purchase, and feed sales.

Numerous alternative water supply solutions have been explored, resulting in the most feasible and economic opportunity being the joint development of the R9 Ranch. The Cities have complied with the State regulatory process and have received favorable rulings in doing so. Despite favorable rulings from the regulating authority, county zoning provisions have been adopted to supersede the State's ruling on the matter, preventing development of the project. The cities request clarity through HB 2433 to protect water rights that have lawfully been granted.

HB 2433 establishes the clarity needed to provide stability, consistency, predictability, and respect for Kansas's water governance structure. I respectfully ask for your support of HB 2433.

Thank you.


Kayla Schneider, MPA, SHRM-CP
City Manager