



February 16, 2022

Chairman Highland and Members of the House Water Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD). KACD represents the 105 county conservation districts (CD's) and 525 volunteer supervisors who provide local leadership to protect and improve our natural resources across the state of Kansas.

KACD greatly appreciates the efforts of the committee to look at ways to improve the protection and management of water in Kansas. Kansas conservation districts play a vital role in this effort, delivering various state water plan financial assistance programs to our land users at the local level. All of these programs are voluntary and we work with producers to address their resource concerns and implement conservation practices and systems. Conservation districts also host education and outreach events across the state, many that focus on protecting water quality and quantity. All of these voluntary efforts are in coordination with and oversight from the Kansas Dept of Agriculture – Division of Conservation (DOC). KACD has the trust of land users across the state and the DOC being part of the Kansas Department of Agriculture has helped districts build that trust.

KACD does have a serious concern with language in HB 2686 which would move the DOC from the Kansas Department of Agriculture to the proposed Division of Environment and Conservation. The Division of Environment that would be moved over from the Kansas Dept of Health and Environment (KDHE) is primarily regulatory. Only a small percentage of the programs in the current KDHE Division of Environment are voluntary. The DOC and conservation districts work in a voluntary fashion with private land users and being placed in a large regulatory division will diminish the trust that we have with land users and hinder our effectiveness.

We strongly suggest that if the DOC is to be moved out of the Department of Agriculture that it be situated in the Division of Water and Environmental Planning. The DOC and conservation districts deliver many of the state water plan financial assistance programs at the local level and have the capacity to assist with education and outreach efforts that this division will need. This would be a much better fit for the DOC and would benefit the Division of Water and Environmental Planning with the technical expertise and the capacity at the local level to use education and outreach activities to educate the general public on the importance of protecting our water resources. We look forward to visiting more with members of the committee on this important issue.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dan Meyerhoff, Executive Director  
Kansas Association of Conservation Districts

