



To: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chair

From: Dawn Buehler, Executive Director of Friends of the Kaw

Date: January 22, 2024

RE: HB 2541 – Establishing a state conservation fund

Chairman Rahjes and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2541. Friends of the Kaw is a conservation group dedicated to the Kansas River. Our members come from rural, urban, and suburban areas and represent canoers, kayakers, anglers, hunters, and locals who love the river. Our organization provides educational programming about the Kansas River ecosystem, as well as advocates for conservation practices to maintain a healthy river for future generations.

We are members of the Kansans for Conservation coalition which has led the collaborative drafting process of HB 2541. Conservation is the proper management of our natural resources and there are few investments more critical to the quality of life in Kansas. Our economic success, public health, and future generations are dependent upon us maintaining and improving these resources. Currently, the state does not provide the proper funding for this work and is subsequently losing out on federal or private matching dollars to the 35 states that have already established dedicated conservation funding, including all four of our neighbors.

We strongly support the mission of Kansans for Conservation and this bill, as it will provide much needed funding to support working lands, wildlife habitat and parks. Anyone who has traversed the Kansas River in recent years has seen firsthand what we are losing. As we lose streambanks, gain silt, and whittle down biodiversity, we are experiencing declining water quantity, water quality, food for our families and quality of life. We believe in the value of conservation to help our economy, our rural and urban areas, our farmers and to benefit a healthy watershed.

As outlined above and by our fellow coalition members, the establishment of state conservation funding benefits all Kansans, allows for the proper stewardship of the resources bestowed upon us, and enables the state to be competitive for match opportunities. Therefore, we ask you to support HB 2541.

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