



Date: March 7, 2024
To: Chairman Virgil Peck, Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
From: Shahira Stafford, Kansas Cooperative Council
RE: Proponent Testimony on HB 2607

Chairman Peck and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing the Kansas Cooperative Council (Co-op Council) to submit comments in support of House Bill 2607. Formed in 1944, the Co-op Council is a voluntary trade association representing all forms of cooperatively structured business in Kansas. Our purpose is to further the understanding of cooperative principals, methods of doing business, and the impact co-ops have on our state's rural economy. Kansas co-ops have over 575 locations, employ over 5,000 people, and represent over 116,000 members.

Most of the co-op council's membership are agricultural retail cooperatives that employ commercially licensed pesticide applicators, which is why we have an interest in HB 2607.

This bill proposes comprehensive changes to Kansas pesticide law to stay compliant with federal standards on applying restricted use pesticides (RUPs). The bill would enhance requirements for pesticide applicator education and safety, establish additional categories of licensure and certification, provide mandatory training for private applicators, and establish record keeping requirements. Additionally, the bill would increase civil and criminal penalties for violations.

In 2017, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized stronger standards for people who use RUPs. The revisions to the Certification of Pesticide Applicators (CPA) rule help ensure RUPs are used safely and reduce the likelihood of misapplication.

The Co-op Council understands the Kansas Department of Agriculture's (KDA) requirement to have a state plan approved by the EPA that complies with those federal standards. While this bill places additional requirements on our members who are commercially licensed applicators, it's important to our industry that Kansas retains state primacy over RUPs.

We support the amendments made in the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee and appreciate the KDA's willingness to work with industry on those changes. It's our understanding that additional amendments are needed to readjust the civil penalty maximums to prevent the EPA from challenging Kansas' modified plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support, and we respectfully ask that you advance the bill at the appropriate time.