

**Kansas Horse Council**  
**Opening Statement to the Chairman and Members of the Committee on**  
**Agriculture and Natural Resources**  
**HB 2449**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources:

On behalf of the Kansas Horse Council, I would like to thank you for your consideration of proposed House Bill No. 2449.

HB 2449 would create a voluntary commercial equine feed assessment program. The program would generate revenue to build and sustain equine activities, education, research and marketing programs in Kansas. For ease of discussion, we have titled this the Kansas Equine Education and Promotion or KEEP program. As drafted, HB 2449 would establish an independent board of directors to manage the KEEP program. The Board would entertain grant applications from the public at large, weigh the merits of the applications and award grants. We expect the Board to establish suitability guidelines for prospective grant awards in accordance with HB 2449.

HB 2449 allows for an assessment on commercial equine feed sold in Kansas not to exceed \$2.00 per ton, which is 5 cents on each fifty pound feedbag. By our estimates, this will cost approximately \$1.50 per horse, per year. It will be the responsibility of feed manufacturers to aggregate and remit assessments to the KEEP board. It is important for the Committee to be aware that assessment is completely voluntary. HB 2449 allows individual consumers – the horse owner – to request a full refund of the assessment.

HB 2449 states that the KEEP board will use assessment revenue to support research and public education for equine-related issues, promote the development of and uses for equine and create public awareness of the value of equine activities. There are numerous unfunded and underfunded equine programs in Kansas. For example, one of the largest equine activities in Kansas is trail riding. While there are many trails available to horse riders in Kansas, frequently there are insufficient funds to properly promote and maintain these trails. Grants for castration programs, funding and oversight of rescue facilities and for public education programs could help to combat horse overpopulation and reduce unwanted horses. And possibilities for public education and awareness are virtually endless.

Unlike many livestock and agricultural commodities, the Kansas equine industry has no means of self-funding. Beef, dairy cattle, swine, wheat, soybeans, corn, sunflowers, chickens and the propane industry have some sort of check-off or assessment to promote and sustain their industry. And other states – Illinois, North Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, to name a few – have implemented programs similar to KEEP.

The KEEP Board will be heavily influenced by the Kansas Horse Council. The Council is uniquely positioned to facilitate the management of the KEEP program as it is the only horse organization in Kansas whose mission is to support horse owners and the Kansas equine industry, regardless of breed or discipline. The KEEP Board will be required to report on its activities directly to the Secretary of Agriculture. Furthermore, the Secretary, or their designee, will serve as an ex officio member of the KEEP Board.

With me today are people that represent the horse industry, including breed associations, horse owners, business owners, trail organizations and others. They offer their full support of the KEEP program.

The Kansas Horse Council asks the Committee to recommend that HB 2449 be submitted to the full House of Representatives for passage. At this time I would entertain questions from the Committee.