

COUNTY WEED DIRECTOR'S ASSOCIATION OF KANSAS

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

RE: HB 2479 – An act relating to noxious weeds.

March 9, 2016

Topeka, Kansas

Presented by:

Gwen Rodriguez, President

County Weed Directors Association of Kansas

Chairman Powell and members of the Committee:

My name is Gwen Rodriguez. I am the President of the County Weed Director's Association of Kansas (CWDAK) and director of the Morton County Noxious Weed Department. We appreciate the opportunity to express our support on House Bill 2479.

House Bill 2479, introduced by the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA), makes several changes to the noxious weed law. Our association has been working in conjunction with KDA for the last two years in order to bring you a bill that both KDA and CWDAK can support.

Changing the way invasive weeds are declared noxious from legislative action to regulation under the secretary of agriculture will allow invasive weeds to be dealt with in a timelier manor when infestations are located. House Bill 2479 would allow the secretary of agriculture to declare a weed noxious with an emergency declaration of up to 18 months so that action to contain or eradicate the weed can be taken and cost-share chemicals can be used. Our association supports declaring weeds noxious by regulation so as to hopefully prevent the next noxious weed in Kansas from becoming another musk thistle or Sericea

lespedeza, weeds that have cost the landowners of Kansas millions of dollars by becoming well established before action was taken.

Our association also supports the formation of a state noxious weed advisory committee, of which our association would have two members, for the purpose of studying the economic impact of invasive weeds on Kansas agriculture and the need to declare them noxious. The committee, made up of weed experts, would make recommendations through the use of a risk assessment management tool to the secretary of agriculture as to the designation and classification of state noxious weeds.

House Bill 2479 also allows flexibility for county commissioners to fund their noxious weed programs within their county. House Bill 2479 allows funding through a tax levy for a noxious weed eradication fund or funding their noxious weed program through the general fund. Our association supports this language which allows county commissioners to fund their individual programs in which ever manor best fits their overall county budget.

CWDAK also supports making changes as to how we collect unpaid accounts either from having served a legal notice for treatment or from an unpaid chemical sale. Currently we can only collect an amount equal to 10% of the assessed valuation of the property per year. This can take several years in many situations to collect the entire bill and the county essentially becomes a financial lender to the landowner. House Bill 2479 would allow the county to place 50% of the cost of treatment on the tax rolls against the tract of land treated allowing the county to be reimbursed the expenses over a two year period. House Bill 2479 also allows the landowner to request the county commission work with them to develop a payment plan so as to not cause a hardship to a landowner but puts the responsibility for noxious weed control on the landowner.

Our association appreciates this opportunity to express our support of House Bill 2479. I will be happy to try and answer any questions.

Thank You.