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Date: March 10, 2022

To: Senator Dan Kerschen, Chairman, Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources

From: Gary Feist, Southern Kansas Cotton Growers Cooperative, Inc.; Kansas Cotton Association

RE: Proponent Testimony on HB 2559

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

My name is Gary Feist. I am the General Manager of SKCG, and chairman of the Kansas Cotton Association. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2559 to establish the Kansas Cotton Boll Weevil Program. This bill will help us keep Kansas a boll-weevil free state.

Introduction

The Kansas Cotton Association, and associated cotton gins, have been supporting a small scale, voluntary boll weevil trapping program for many years, including recent investments in a full-time director/trapper, a vehicle, and technical support for a customized data management software program and tablets. The National Cotton Council, which is the national governing body of the cotton industry, has established minimum boll weevil trapping requirements for the Cotton Belt. Our voluntary efforts in Kansas have not been able to attain the national minimum trapping requirements, e.g., trap density. Due to the increasing acres over the last several years, in particular, the job has grown well beyond our capacity to meet trapping obligations without significantly re-structuring and formalizing our operation for the administration, funding, and execution of the trapping and all associated responsibilities.

What's the problem?

Kansas needs an established, independent, self-funded organization to manage and operate state-wide trapping and associated tasks to accomplish the primary objective of insuring the rapid detection of any boll weevil infestation in Kansas, and have the framework in place to implement the necessary actions to eliminate it, should it occur.

How will bill fix the problem?

This bill will formally establish the "Kansas Cotton Boll Weevil Program", to be governed and directed by cotton producer-stakeholders, authorize the collection of fees, trapping, monitoring and treatment, if needed. Establishing the KCBWP organization defines producer participation, and facilitates relationships with the FSA, KDA, and or other entities, to assist in accomplishing our mission. Additionally, the creation of the Kansas Cotton Boll Weevil Program will demonstrate the Kansas cotton industry's commitment to the national effort to eradicate boll weevil in the United States.

Thank you again, for the opportunity to speak to you about this important issue and I ask your support of House Bill 2559. Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions.