



Date: March 5, 2024

To: Chairman Virgil Peck, Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

From: Shahira Stafford, Kansas Cooperative Council

RE: Proponent Testimony on HB 2477

Chairman Peck and Members of the Committee,

My name is Shahira Stafford, and I'm here representing the Kansas Cooperative Council (Co-op Council) as a proponent of House Bill 2477.

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.

Here are a few facts that may surprise you:

- There are over 116,000 members of co-ops that are headquartered in Kansas.
- There are over 575 co-op locations serving members across the state.
- Over 5,000 people are employed by Kansas farmer cooperatives.

Agricultural cooperatives often have grain, agronomy, precision ag, seed, feed, and fuel operations. Specifically, our grain elevator and pesticide dealer co-ops pay annual fees into the Kansas Agricultural Remediation Fund (remediation fund) within the Kansas Department of Agriculture. This fund serves as an insurance policy to help recoup expenses incurred during remediation and clean-up of agricultural chemicals.

Current law allows eligible applicants to seek reimbursement of clean-up costs up to \$200,000 per site. HB 2477 simply increases that maximum reimbursement to \$300,000 per site. The bill would also increase the amount available to the Kansas Agricultural Remediation Board (KARB) for administrative overhead expenses from \$150,000 to \$175,000. The amounts in current law have been in place since the program's inception in 2001. It's also important to note that the program receives no state general fund dollars and is 100% self-funded by the agribusiness industry.

Co-op Council members consistently pay year after year into the remediation fund because they recognize the importance of protecting and remediating Kansas soil and ground water. Thus, we stand in support of allowing more of their dollars to be returned specifically for that purpose.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify as a proponent of HB 2477, and I'm happy to answer any questions from the committee.