

Date: March 7, 2024

Re: HB 2607- Oral Proponent

To: Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources, Chairman Peck

From: Claudia Hissong, Kansas Farm Bureau

Chairman Peck and members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB 2607. My name is Claudia Hissong, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB) members. KFB is the state's largest general farm organization representing more than 30,000 farm and ranch families through our 105 county Farm Bureau Associations.

HB 2607 is a result of EPA updating the Certification of Pesticide Applicators regulations to set stronger standards for those who apply restricted use pesticides. We appreciate the Kansas Department of Agriculture's (KDA) work in updating and submitting plans to certify applicators under these updated standards. It is of utmost importance to maintain state primacy, and we value KDA's efforts to comply with EPA guidelines while keeping this standard.

KFB is supportive of this bill to remain in compliance with EPA guidelines and keep state primacy. We are appreciative of amendments made in the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee to improve the bill as well. The first amendment being restoring the ability for agriculture producers to barter services. There are many benefits to allowing producers to barter services. For example, one producer may invest in chemical application equipment and by spreading those costs over more acres through barter agreements with fellow producers we make beneficial technologies more cost efficient. Eliminating the ability for producers to barter services, some producers may experience delayed services from commercial applicators resulting in less effective herbicide or pest control, increased likelihood of herbicide resistance weed populations, lower yields and overall, less farm profit.

Additionally, KFB appreciates decreasing the maximum cap of a fine for a private applicator and setting an overall maximum penalty amount. The original bill could potentially be extremely costly on a producer who is a private applicator. The amended bill would still allow KDA to enforce the pesticide act but restrict the financial burden that may be placed on producers.

It is important to note, an amendment made in the House raises the age to 17 years of age for a minor to apply pesticides under the supervision of a family member. This is more stringent than EPA standards at 16 years of age. Our membership is generally opposed to more restrictive measures at the state level than required by EPA.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2607. HB 2607 contains provisions that are necessary for the state of Kansas to keep state primacy and we request its passage.