

**Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 2605
to the House Committee on Agriculture
by Kelsey Olson, Deputy Secretary
Kansas Department of Agriculture
February 17, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chairman Rahjes and members of the committee. I am Kelsey Olson and I serve as the Deputy Secretary of the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA). Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2605.

K.S.A. 74-576(c) directs the Secretary of Agriculture to “foster and promote the development and economic welfare of the agricultural industry of the state.” Recognizing the key role that animal agriculture plays in the Kansas economy, KDA supports House Bill 2605 which provides important updates to the Veterinary Training Program for Rural Kansas (VTPRK). The program, established in 2006 by the Kansas legislature, has served 80 students and has been a successful tool in recruiting students to rural Kansas.

The VTPRK program offers financial assistance to students who attend the Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine and commit to practicing in a rural area of Kansas. In addition to financial support, the program also ensures that the students practicing in rural Kansas have the training and experiences necessary to successfully conduct a veterinary practice in rural Kansas. This program continues to be a critical economic development tool for rural Kansas as livestock production is the largest contributor to the agriculture industry in Kansas. A survey conducted by K-State Veterinary Medicine revealed that nearly 60% of producers said there is a shortage of rural veterinarians. In order to allow the animal agriculture economy to continue growing, we must have a plan to overcome this shortage, and the VTPRK program is designed to help increase the number of rural veterinarians in Kansas.

The VTPRK program has helped attract young veterinarians to rural Kansas since its inception, and 94% of VTPRK students are still working in a qualifying county. The time has come to make updates to the program so it will continue to be a relevant and effective program for supporting Kansas veterinary medical students who are willing to return to rural Kansas to focus on food animal needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2605. KDA believes that passage of this bill will provide the necessary enhancements to the Veterinary Training Program for Rural Kansas, ensuring that future veterinarians will practice in rural Kansas.