

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 2543
to the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
By Kelsey Olson, Deputy Secretary
Kansas Department of Agriculture
February 8, 2024**

Good afternoon, Chairman Rahjes and members of the committee. My name is Kelsey Olson and I serve as the Deputy Secretary for the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA).

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2543. The Kansas livestock industry is the most profitable agriculture sector in the state. Beef cattle ranching and farming including feedlots and dual-purpose ranching and farming are the highest output in the Kansas economy with \$10 billion. It is also the top sector for employment offering 34,000 jobs. The livestock industry supports the meat processing industry which is another one of the most profitable agriculture sectors in the state. The animal (except poultry) slaughtering industry is the third highest output in the state with \$7 billion and meat processed from carcasses is the fourth highest output with \$4 billion.

Any person may adopt and use a brand for the purpose of branding their livestock in accordance with authorized rules and regulations of the Animal Health Commissioner of the Kansas Department of Agriculture Division of Animal Health. KDA currently registers 17,000 brands and an estimate of 1,500 new brands are requested each year. To apply for a brand, ranchers must give the Commissioner a copy of the brand requested along with the application. KDA must review the application and determine the eligibility of the brand within 60 days of receipt of the application. If approved by the Commissioner, the applicant submits a registration payment for the registered brand.

The last time the fee cap was raised was in 1991 when it went from \$35 to \$55. HB 2543 would increase the cap to \$100. The enacted fee would be established through the Rules and Regulation process. It is KDA's intention to establish the new registration fee at \$70. The fee registration is good for a 5-year period. If the brand is not modified or transferred, it will remain on the same five-year renewal plan.

HB 2543 also authorizes the Animal Health Commissioner to have the ability to assess an application fee in addition to the registration fee. The registration fee and application fee combined are not to exceed \$100. KDA has seen a growing interest in livestock producers or brand aficionados who apply for multiple brands but may only register one in the end. KDA staff work to determine if each requested brand is available, and whether the eligibility of the brand location is also available. This can be a time-consuming process for the Division of

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Animal Health staff. The agency would like to charge a \$5 application fee to assist with covering the costs of researching the brand and ensuring the interest level of the applicant.

The overall goal of this bill is to continue the brand service to ranchers in Kansas and support the industry as new brands are being created, modified, and renewed, while keeping the program self-sustaining, but at a minimal cost for ranchers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2543. I'm happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.