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House of Representatives

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Steven C. Johnson
Representative, 108th District

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

My name is Steven Johnson and it is my pleasure to serve with you as a member of the House of Representatives from the 108th District.

I appear before you today as a proponent of House Bill 2743.

Many of you and our other conferees have a better knowledge of the regulation and history of deer permits in Kansas. I have spoken with neighbors about this issue over the last year and you have testimony Joel Weimer. We are fortunate to have the C&W Ranch in our community for a variety of reasons. They are a meaningful economic engine and very much parlay their success into the success of our community.

I know their ability to count on a few transferable deer permits would add to the visitors they bring to our community each year. The other purchases made in our community are part of the economic growth upon which we depend. It is my hope you will consider their testimony.

My farm is along the Smoky Hill River in central Kansas. The wooded riverbends are a great playground and habitat for a variety of wildlife including deer. We are blessed, and sometimes burdened, with deer in abundance.

People sometimes talk of who should really own the deer. It is certainly not me, but I don't believe any one person has more of a claim. I do have an investment feeding them (and many other visitors, welcome and not.) I don't happen to be a deer hunter.

For many years following my father's death, friends and colleagues from Arkansas travelled to Kansas to help me harvest and plant each spring and fall. They loved hunting deer. They entered the lottery for an out of state tag, although I think they were only able to obtain one or possibly two over many years. (You may be glad to know they did not get a deer.)

I would have liked to help them to secure a tag and ensure they could enjoy their passion while helping me. It would have been the best form of payment I could offer. The question I ask is why do only my neighbors who are hunters have access to the deer which travel our land? Why should I not be able to indirectly enjoy the same access given we all bear the same cost? Should control and access to hunting be under control of the state without deference to the landowner?

Further, related economic factors are once again in play. If my friends come into the area, they spend all along 135 and we spend in the Salina area. If I allow someone from Salina to hunt who can obtain a permit, they may make no additional purchases.

I do know these issues have many important perspectives. I thank the committee for your consideration and the opportunity to present my perspective.