

**To: Senate Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, Senator Kerschen, Chairman**

**From: Kent Askren, Public Policy Director for Kansas Farm Bureau**

**Date: March 14, 2022**

**Re: Testimony in opposition to SB 548**

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Chairman Kerschen and members of the Committee, on behalf of Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB) I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to SB 548. 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.

SB 548 proposes the elimination of input by local water users who are statutorily given the responsibility of developing and implementing a management program in fulfilling the stated purposes in the Groundwater Management Districts (GMD) Act. Kansas Farm Bureau member developed policy supports the Groundwater Management District Act.

We are all aware of the groundwater declines in the Ogallala, the delicate balance of managing groundwater use and its interaction with surface water in the Rattlesnake Creek watershed, and the quantity and quality challenges within the Equus Beds aquifer.

Through GMD leadership, further water right development within these regions has been halted and water metering has been implemented that is the envy of the nation. Groundwater models and monitoring with GMD leadership or support has occurred, at great costs, to provide tools and information for management program implementation.

Right now, management program implementation is governed by locals developing a program in conformity with the basic water use doctrine of our state. The proposed management program is then reviewed by the chief engineer and if it does not conflict with the basic laws and policies of the state is sent back to the GMD for public hearings before ultimately being adopted.

Water right applications for new appropriations and to change existing water rights are ***currently reviewed by GMDs for conformity with their management program***. As you can imagine, each GMD has unique issues therefore requiring unique solutions. **SB 548 would eliminate this critical role of water right review.**

We appreciate the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 548 and would be happy to address any questions at the appropriate time.