



**House Taxation Committee
Written Testimony in Support of HB 2298
Removing the Sunset on Rural Opportunity Zones
By Randy Stookey, General Counsel
Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Assn, Kansas Grain and Feed Assn,
Jointly, with the Kansas Cooperative Council
March 11, 2015**

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 2298.

The Kansas Grain and Feed Association (KGFA) is a voluntary state association with a membership encompassing the entire spectrum of the grain receiving, storage, processing and shipping industry in the state of Kansas. KGFA's membership includes over 950 Kansas business locations and represents 99% of the commercially licensed grain storage in the state.

Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Association (KARA) membership includes over 700 agribusiness firms which supply fertilizers, crop protection chemicals, seed, petroleum products and agronomic expertise to Kansas farmers and ranchers. KARA's membership base also includes ag-chemical and equipment manufacturing firms, distribution firms and other businesses associated with the crop production industry.

The Kansas Cooperative Council (KCC) is a voluntary, statewide trade association representing all forms of cooperative businesses across the state -- agricultural, utility, credit, financial, refining and consumer cooperatives.

Our organizations enthusiastically support HB 2298, which will continue a program which has proven to bring new residents to rural Kansas counties with declining populations. Population loss in rural Kansas has shown to be as costly as any drought or ice storm. By offering income tax rebates and a state-county partnership to pay down students loans for relocating out of state residents, this program has provided a desperately needed economic boost for rural areas of our state.

Rural workforce decline has proven to be a persistent cancer on our state that has resulted in loss of state revenue, loss of our best and brightest young adults, and loss of the livelihood of hard working citizens. Rural agribusiness greatly appreciates the vision of the legislature to focus on continuing this program to increase the workforce in rural Kansas, benefiting our entire state.

We enthusiastically urge this Committee to support the Kansas Rural Opportunity Zones program and move HB 2298 favorably out of the committee.