



To: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, Representative Ken Rahjes, Chair

From: Justin Cobb, The Nature Conservancy

Date: February 5th, 2025

RE: HB 2111 - Increasing the CREP acreage cap to 60,000 acres, clarifying eligibility and criteria, allowing exceptions for specific conditions and modifying reporting requirements to cover the last five years.

Chairman Rahjes and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide **proponent** testimony on **HB 2111**. The Nature Conservancy in Kansas is a conservation nonprofit with a mission of conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Our staff are actively engaged in conservation efforts in both of the eligible Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) regions – Upper Arkansas River and Rattlesnake Creek Sub-Basin.

CREP, administered by the Kansas Department of Agriculture’s Division of Conservation, provides a helpful option for transitioning land use on irrigated acres for water conservation purposes. Often, native grasses are re-established as land cover and provide stacked ecosystem benefits such as wildlife habitat, water filtration, and drought resiliency.

Consistently, the main request from producers regarding CREP is increased flexibility. As it is a federal program, specific protocols must be followed in practices such as grass establishment and subsequent land use. In some cases, this can lead to a failure to establish grasses in sandy soils or sub-optimal range management through limited grazing allowances. These restrictions can be detrimental to full utilization of the program, and the department should be postured in both statute and program to promote and adopt increased flexibilities as they become available.

HB 2111 provides flexibility for the department as well as allowing an overall increase in enrolled acres. Passing HB 2111 would provide more and better options for landowners facing difficult decisions.

The Nature Conservancy requests that the committee report favorably on HB 2111.