

Beth Gaines
306 Armer
Westmoreland, KS 66549
beth.riffel@gmail.com - 785.307.3226

January 31, 2025

The Honorable Susan Estes, Chair
House Committee on Education
Kansas State Legislature

Subject: Support for HB 2103 – Excused Absences for Educational Opportunities

Dear Chair Estes and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my support for HB 2103, which seeks to grant students excused absences for participating in educational opportunities outside the regular school program. As the mother of three former Kansas 4-H and FFA members, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact these programs have on students' personal development, leadership skills, and future career opportunities.

Programs such as 4-H, FFA, and other agricultural organizations provide invaluable hands-on learning experiences that complement traditional classroom instruction. They teach responsibility, work ethic, problem-solving, and public speaking—skills essential for success in any field. While FFA is an intracurricular activity that operates as part of an approved agriculture education program, 4-H and other agricultural organizations, such as livestock breed organizations, are not afforded the same privilege of receiving excused absences when students miss scheduled school days to participate in these rich learning experiences.

Agriculture is Kansas's most significant economic driver, and we must continue to support this industry by developing the future workforce. Many of the students involved in these organizations will become the next generation of farmers, ranchers, agribusiness leaders, and agricultural scientists. By ensuring they can fully engage in these educational programs without academic penalty, we are investing in the future of Kansas agriculture and its economic stability.

HB 2103 would ensure that students are not unfairly penalized for engaging in experiences that enhance their learning, leadership, and career readiness. By granting excused absences for these activities, Kansas will affirm its commitment to a well-rounded education and support students in developing critical skills for their futures.

I urge the committee to support HB 2103 and provide students the flexibility they need to take full advantage of these impactful learning experiences. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Beth Gaines". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.