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Chairman Powell and Members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee:

The Kansas Land Trust (KLT) is a private, non-profit organization. KLT works with Kansas landowners who voluntarily seek to preserve their natural and agricultural heritage, by protecting in perpetuity the agricultural, recreational, ecological, and scenic features of their land. On behalf of KLT, I write in opposition to SB 425.

Working with a landowner, KLT uses a perpetual conservation easement, a voluntary agreement between a landowner and KLT, whereby the landowner gives or sells to KLT one or more of their "bundle of property rights." Conservation easements enable landowners to continue to farm and sell their land while restricting non-agricultural land uses. Over the past twenty-five years the Kansas Land Trust has developed conservation easements on 64 properties in Kansas, preserving 31,775 acres of land.

The KLT Board of Directors and members value private property rights - one of which is to conserve the natural features of their land. With some easements, KLT has partnered with other organizations to purchase these development rights, compensating family farmers a cumulative total of \$12,594,947. In particular, KLT has a partnership with Fort Riley using perpetual conservation easements to build a natural buffer around the Fort Riley installation. These perpetual conservation easements assist Fort Riley's mission and training activities without encroaching on adjoining landowners' rights. Perpetual conservation easements assist our national security in Kansas and across the United States.

In addition to assisting landowners, perpetual conservation easements protect important natural resources, prime farmland, tall grass prairies, wildlife habitat, and important water resources for future generations. Conservation easements assist farm families with estate and succession planning providing beginning farmers an opportunity to purchase agricultural land at a discounted price.

SB 425 imposes unnecessary governmental regulations on landowner property rights. The Kansas Land Trust strongly opposes SB 425.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Jerry Jost  
Executive Director  
Kansas Land Trust