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House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture
Representative Kyle Hoffman, Chair

Esteemed Representatives,

The purpose of this correspondence is to serve as written testimony in support of HB 2552. I am a fourth-year veterinary student at Kansas State University's College of Veterinary Medicine and a member of the Veterinary Training Program for Rural Kansas (VTPRK). I was incredibly fortunate to have been selected for this honor in October of 2014. I fully support the KSU CVM's authority to expand this outstanding scholarship program.

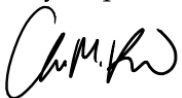
I grew up in Winfield, KS. Though we lived within city limits, my Grandparents' beef cattle ranch in eastern Cowley County has always been and continues to be the source of my professional and personal inspiration. Some of my earliest memories center on the rare occasions when local veterinarians would make farm calls, usually for calving trouble. The professionalism, poise, competency, and genuine concern for both bovine patient and economically-vested owner demonstrated by Drs. Fisher and Warren generated in me a sense of incredible awe and respect. As a very small boy, the first thing I can ever remember wanting to be was a large animal veterinarian.

In 91 days, this childhood dream becomes a reality. I have passed my national licensing exam, coursework is all but complete, and job offers are on the table. My heart's greatest desire is to return to Cowley County and pick up my new-DVM's share of the veterinary torch now carried by Drs. Warren (Junior) and Nelson as they serve the farmers and ranchers of Cowley, Sumner, Chautauqua, and Elk Counties. They have offered me a position as a new veterinary associate, a position the Winfield Veterinary Hospital has been attempting to fill for nearly two years.

The problem is, a population of just under 36,000 disqualifies the farmers and ranchers of Cowley County from obtaining the up-to-the-minute animal health knowledge of a freshly trained KSU DVM. Representative Ed Trimmer, on behalf of his constituents in Cowley County, has worked in the House to introduce HB 2553, a measure to increase the VTPRK county maximum to 40,000. A hearing for 2553 was scheduled and then canceled, thus, amending HB 2552 is our final chance to implement the goals of 2553. This change that would mean that Kansas Agriculture's stakeholders in Cowley, Crawford, Finney, and Geary Counties could share in the benefit that the VTPRK provides. For reference, the next largest county, Saline, has a population of almost 56,000. HB 2553's proposal mirrored in HB 2552 is logical. The growth in our state has caused this original metric of 35,000 to become outdated. Cowley County, at 32 people per square mile remains a "densely-settled rural" area when stratified by the population density metrics employed by the KDHE, and regardless, the veterinary practice in Winfield provides services overlapping into Elk, Chautauqua, and Sumner counties, each of which easily qualify to share in the VTPRK's benefits. After 12 years, it's high time the VTPRK receives the facelift it so desperately needs.

On May 11, 2018, I will take the Veterinarian's Oath, solemnly swearing to employ my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through protection of animal health and welfare, conservation of animal resources, and promotion of public health. The gravity of safeguarding our Nation's food supply and contributing to a sustainable future for Kansas family farms and ranches lends my professional ambitions a singular seriousness of purpose. Let me, and as many other new veterinary students as possible, return to a freshly-defined rural Kansas to get started on our life's work. I wish I were able to participate in person but school, as always, is the priority. I am, however, happy to answer any questions you may have by phone or e-mail at your convenience.

Very respectfully,



Chase M. Reed, MS