

Russell County Economic Development and CVB, 331 E. Wichita, Russell, Ks 67665
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PRO SB 263

Chairman Hoffman and Members of the House Ag Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address your committee in regards to SB 263. Russell County is pleased to be part of the industrial hemp initiative in Kansas and develop a new value added ag industry for the Kansas ag producer and new job and business growth in the sectors of processing and manufacturing in rural Kansas. In an effort to provide the best study possible, we would like to request a minor amendment to the language in regards to the test pilot in Russell County. For example, "A pilot program in Russell County for the purpose of economic development, research, cultivation, market analysis, manufacturing and transportation of certified seed or industrial hemp pursuant to this act."

Russell County Economic Development and CVB is PRO in regards to SB 263. The economic downturn of the current commodity economy has left ag producers in need of an opportunity to diversify the small independent farm. This commodity downturn has also taken its toll on the rural business environment. Industrial Hemp is a specialty crop that creates diversity in ag production and opens the door for new business growth in the form of processing and/or manufacturing opportunities. The market for this opportunity is now, before Kansas is passed up by other states already taking the opportunity that the industrial hemp market provides. We are currently working with local business leaders, city/county leaders, agribusinesses, bankers, ag producers and ag equipment dealerships to facilitate a pilot program should SB 263 pass. The excitement and momentum that has been built is to the benefit of Kansas in moving this new industry forward. With the growing need within the economic needs of Kansas, the upward climb of taxes, and the decline of population suffered statewide, Kansas needs a new and viable industry to not only sustain but to also boost growth. This is not a bill that hides itself as a movement for the legalization of marijuana. Ag producers and business investors desire this

opportunity as a value added ag sector initiative. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

Janae Talbott