



To: House Committee on Agriculture  
Rep. Ken Rahjes, Chair

From: Matt Teagarden, Chief Executive Officer, Kansas Livestock Association

Re: **HB 2605 AN ACT concerning animal care; relating to the veterinary training program for rural Kansas; establishing an advisory committee; increasing the rural population requirement maximum; creating a food animal percentage requirement in lieu of such rural population requirement.**

Date: February 17, 2022

*The Kansas Livestock Association (KLA), formed in 1894, is a trade association representing over 5,700 members on legislative and regulatory issues. KLA members are involved in many aspects of the livestock industry, including seed stock, cow-calf, and stocker cattle production; cattle feeding; dairy production; swine production; grazing land management; and diversified farming operations.*

*Kansas Farm Bureau (KFB) is the state's largest general farm organization representing more than 30,000 farm and ranch families through our 105 county Farm Bureau Associations.*

Thank you, Chairman Rahjes and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify. I am testifying in support of HB 2605 on behalf of Kansas Farm Bureau and the Kansas Livestock Association.

HB 2605 builds upon an extremely successful program, the Veterinary Training Program for Rural Kansas (VTPRK). This program was established by a bill that originated in this committee in 2006. HB 2605 would implement several stakeholder-identified enhancements that will ensure the program's continued success. These include an advisory board of stakeholders, flexibility to accept students later in their veterinary education, an increase in the scholarship amount, and important updates to guidelines for eligible practices.

Providing for the well-being of their animals is a top priority for livestock producers. Not only is it the right thing to do, it is an essential part of a successful, sustainable operation. While livestock owners provide for the day-to-day care of their animals, working with a veterinarian is important in preventing and treating disease. Many

veterinarians also provide advice on breeding decisions, nutrition, and marketing. Veterinarians also play an important role in providing safe, nutritious protein for consumers across the country and around the world.

According to a recent survey, nearly 60 percent of livestock producers reported a shortage of veterinarians. Those results match up with reports from our members about a lack of veterinary services available for their operations. VTPRK is helping to address that need.

VTPRK is not just a scholarship program. It is an integrated program that provides education, training, and experiences that help ensure program participants are prepared to be successful veterinary professionals upon graduation. The team at the Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine works closely with VTPRK students, resulting in 98% of program participants either having fulfilled, or on track to fulfill, their post-graduation program obligations.

As the proposed enhancements for the VTPRK program have come together, there has been discussion about opportunities to support additional veterinary students intending to practice in rural Kansas. We recognize there are several Kansas students who complete their veterinary education out-of-state with the desire to return to rural Kansas to practice. We believe there is merit in supporting students in those circumstances, but it does not fit the VTPRK model. KLA and KFB support moving forward with the enhancements to VTPRK contained in HB 2605. At the same time, we are committed to working with stakeholders to develop a program that encourages talented Kansas students to return to rural Kansas upon completion of their veterinary education.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony. KLA and KFB ask that the Committee support HB 2605 and recommend it favorable for passage.