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**Testimony on HB 2302  
To  
House Committee on Water  
Elmer Ronnebaum  
General Manager  
Kansas Rural Water Association  
February 13, 2023**

Chairman Minnix and Members of the Committee:

The Kansas Rural Water Association supports HB 2302 as it will potentially provide significant benefits for water and wastewater systems most in need of financial help. The Kansas Rural Water Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing training and technical assistance to public water and wastewater systems. The Association has the active support of more than 450 cities and 270 rural water districts. The Association provides a vast majority of water and wastewater operator training in Kansas.

HB 2302 would modify the distribution of money coming into the State Water Plan and create a "water technical assistance fund" and a "water projects grant fund" and authorize the Kansas Water Office to administer the programs.

In Kansas, 450 public water supply systems (rural districts and municipal systems) provide service to populations less than 500. There are 329 systems that serve populations from 501-3,300. There are 56 systems that supply populations of 3,301-10,000. A total of 28 systems serve populations of 10,001-100,000; six systems serve populations greater than 100,000. The Kansas Rural Water Association works with nearly all public water and wastewater systems. Those serving populations of 2,000 or less would receive priority consideration through the two grant programs.

HB 2302 provides some loan forgiveness for projects funded through the Kansas Public Water Supply Loan Fund and the Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund. The Kansas Rural Water Association respectfully suggests that such benefits be extended to those small systems funded through USDA Rural Development. In recent years, some very small municipal and rural water and wastewater systems in Kansas have been required to install treatment facilities beyond the financial capacity even to be maintained by those communities, much less to afford the debt service. One example is the very small town of Clayton, Kan. which was compelled to construct an arsenic removal plant because they exceeded an arsenic contaminant level in the source water. Had the project funding been approved at a slightly different time, the community would likely have qualified for a loan forgiveness program that EPA now requires through the Kansas Public Water Supply Loan Fund. Other projects have incurred additional costs because of delays with plan review, etc., none of which was the fault of the borrowers

Numerous projects could benefit from the water projects grant program. Many projects are relatively small and do not require redesign. Examples would be the replacement of waterline valves so that systems can have better control during repairs or other emergencies. Such projects could be expedited as there would be no need for engineering and plan review.

Thank you for your consideration.