

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

RE: HB 2246 – An act relating to noxious weeds.

February 7, 2017

Chairman Hoffman and members of the Committee:

My name is Dennis Peterson. I am the President of the County Weed Director's Association of Kansas (CWDAK) and director of the Riley County Noxious Weed Department. We appreciate the opportunity to testify as an opponent on House Bill 2246.

House Bill 2246 as introduced is the same bill that was introduced last year as HB 2479 by the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA). Our association worked in conjunction with KDA on that legislation and even though we did not support everything in the bill, we did not oppose the legislation. Since the last legislative session, our board of directors has adopted a new Noxious Weed Platform Statement and no longer support noxious weeds being determined by the Secretary of Agriculture as recommended by a Noxious Weed Advisory Committee. We would prefer noxious weeds remain named by statute through legislative action.

There are other parts of House Bill 2246 that our association would support such as allowing flexibility for county commissioners to fund their noxious weed programs within their county. House Bill 2246 allows funding through a tax levy for a noxious weed eradication fund or funding their noxious weed program through the general fund. Our association would support language which allows county commissioners to fund their individual programs in which ever manor best fits their overall county budget.

CWDAK would also support making changes as to how we collect unpaid accounts either from having served a legal notice for treatment or from an unpaid chemical sale. Currently we can only collect an amount equal to 10% of the assessed valuation of the property per year. This can take several years in many situations to collect the entire bill and the county essentially becomes a financial lender to the landowner. House Bill 2246 would allow the county to place 50% of the cost of treatment on the tax rolls against the tract of land treated allowing the county to be reimbursed the expenses over a two year period. House Bill 2246 would also allow the landowner to request the county commission work with them to develop a payment plan so as to not cause a hardship to a landowner but puts the responsibility for noxious weed control on the landowner.

Our association appreciates this opportunity to testify on House Bill 2246. I will be happy to try and answer any questions.

Thank You.