

**Testimony in Support of HB 2552 to
The House Agriculture Committee
By Susan Metzger
Kansas Department of Agriculture
February 12, 2018**

Good afternoon Chairman Hoffman and members of the committee, my name is Susan Metzger and I serve as the deputy secretary for the Kansas Department of Agriculture. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2552.

HB 2552 is one step toward addressing the shortage of large and mixed animal veterinarians practicing in rural communities. In order to grow and expand animal agriculture in Kansas and across the nation, it is imperative that there is a sufficient number of large and mixed animal veterinarians who are willing to serve in rural locations in proximity to the industry.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2010, about six percent of veterinarians specialized in equine veterinary medicine, about eight percent practiced exclusively or predominantly on food animals, and seven percent had mixed animal practices. The same survey indicated that two-thirds of veterinarians were practicing exclusively on companion animals.

On average, 500 students at Kansas State University enter the College of Agriculture with a pre-vet degree path. The College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) at K-State offers 112 positions each year for entry. A decline in the number of graduates from K-State's CVM with a focus on mixed or large animal medicine, who are interested in practicing in rural Kansas, presents a challenge throughout the livestock industry and the animal health sector.

Financial cost is an important consideration, and often a limitation, for students considering an advanced degree. HB 2552 provides the opportunity to reduce the cost for Kansas residents by increasing the number of potential scholarships that may be awarded by K-State's CVM.

In response to the Kansas Agricultural Growth Strategy, the state is also actively seeking additional opportunities to address the shortage of large and mixed animal veterinarians willing to practice in rural communities. Such efforts include, but are not limited to, advocating for the passage of the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program Enhancement Act and creating a work-based learning experience program for secondary school students to partner with veterinary professionals.

Kansas is home to a growing and diverse food animal industry: from beef and dairy, to swine and specialty livestock, such as goats and sheep, as well as a large concentration of public and private entities in the animal

health and nutrition sectors. Developing tomorrow's workforce of veterinarians is critical to the continued success and growth of these industries. HB 2552 is an important step toward meeting this demand.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.