

**Before the House Agriculture Committee
Presented by Zack Pistora, Kansas Sierra Club
Proponent Testimony on HB 2173
February 13, 2019**



Chairman Highland and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide positive testimony on HB 2173, known as the *Kansas Alternative Crop Act*, which would provide for a statewide commercialized industrial hemp program. The Kansas Chapter of Sierra Club has actively advocated for a commercialized industrial hemp program for the past three years.

Kansas Hemp production could be a game-changer for Kansas farmers and agribusinesses.

HB 2173 would pave the way for expanded agricultural opportunity in Kansas, as it has for many other states that have legalized research and commercial production of industrial hemp. As a top ten agriculture state, Kansas ought to accelerate itself as a state leader in U.S. hemp production. Industrial hemp has a variety of uses and can be highly profitable for farmers who may already be struggling financially with growing current commodities. Industrial hemp would fit well for Kansas given our talented research facilities, farmers, and biofuel sector. However, to maximize the economic potential as well as fairness to Kansas farmers, lawmakers must ensure that a commercialized hemp program in Kansas is affordable and available to all law-abiding Kansas farmers with as little bureaucracy and low licensing fees as possible.

We support an industrial hemp program for its added environmental benefits to agricultural production.

The Kansas Sierra Club acknowledges that industrial hemp production could not only help the Kansas farmer and overall state economy, but also our environment as well. Growing hemp can lessen the use of irrigation in water-stricken areas of Kansas, lessen the need for pesticides, and offers a sustainable, renewable energy source that can be easily composted, recycled, and used without toxic additives.

Here are some understood benefits of hemp when it comes to our environment:

- Hemp farmers in Colorado have stated that hemp uses less water than corn.
- Hemp does not require pesticides for successful growth.
- Increasing research demonstrates that industrial hemp can be used as a feedstock for livestock.
- Hemp products can be recycled, reused, and are 100% biodegradable.
- Hemp is a quick-growing renewable resource, making it much more desirable for bio-plastics and biofuels than fossil fuel-based fuels and plastics, as well as a much quicker turnaround for use as paper than slower-growing, more water-intensive trees.
- Hemp can also be used as an alternative for rotational crops, cover crops, and grass-based buffer zones to help with soil health and prevent soil erosion.

We hope HB 2173 will optimize this cash crop's advantages for conserving our natural resources in Kansas.

Thank you,

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The Sierra Club is the largest grassroots environmental organization dedicated to preserving, protecting, and enjoying our great outdoors. The Kansas Chapter represents our state's strongest grassroots voice on environmental matters for more than forty years.