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**Before the
House Committee on Water and Environment
Testimony on HB 2732
Earl Lewis, Assistant Director, Kansas Water Office
February 13, 2018**

Chairman Sloan and members of the committee, my name is Earl Lewis and I am the Assistant Director of the Kansas Water Office. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 2732.

House Bill 2732 would authorize the division of conservation of the Kansas department of agriculture to create and administer water banks. Currently one water bank exists within the state of Kansas, in Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5.

The Long Term Vision for the Future of Water Supply in Kansas has an action item to “explore opportunities to establish Water Banks to promote trading of water amongst water right holders” as a way to better balance efficient water use and economic benefit. HB 2732 would assist in accomplishing this objective.

Under current state law, K.S.A. 82a-767, the director of the Kansas Water Office is charged with convening a team to evaluate the operation of any water bank after each five years of operations. An evaluation team has recently been formed, as per this statute, to review operations of the Central Kansas Water Bank. The previous evaluation identified changes needed within the statute to make the bank work better and meet the legal intent. It is possible the current evaluation could also identify beneficial modifications to statute.

It is unlikely that a state-run bank would be placed into operation until such time as any changes identified in the current bank review are enacted. Therefore, it may be more appropriate to delay action on creation of authority for the division of conservation to establish banks until a more complete set of recommendations can be put forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I will be happy to stand for questions at the appropriate time.