



House Committee on Commerce Labor & Economic Development

Opposition testimony on HB2595

Kansas Farmers Union is one of the state's oldest active general farm organizations, representing Kansas farmers and ranchers since 1907. Our primary goal is to sustain, strengthen, protect, and enhance the economic interests and quality of life for family farmers and ranchers and their rural communities.

Kansas Farmers Union very strongly opposes HB 2595, an act concerning food labeling.

In many parts of the country, value-added and local foods agricultural production has become an accepted, and often profitable, alternative to conventional production. Sadly, Kansas has lagged behind many of our neighboring states, especially those states geographically surrounding the Great Lakes region, in recognizing and accepting niche- market ag. production as a viable business enterprise.

Kansas Farmers Union's work with beginning farmers and veterans interested in entering agriculture strongly revolves around value-added agricultural opportunities for these entities, primarily due to their lack of equity and their lack of opportunity to land access. Value-added agriculture is an attractive opportunity for those willing to do it to turn their sweat equity into profits. It is obvious to us Kansas has great opportunities in these enterprises, but in the shadow of conventional agriculture, gets little credibility.

We feel this bill could potentially cap the potential of niche food markets that are currently growing very rapidly, and as explained earlier, are being outperformed by our neighboring states.

People want to know what they are eating. The public support for food labeling is undeniable. We support the consumer's right to know where and how their food is grown and to know the grower.

We support local control of issues, and this bill preempts local municipalities' abilities to address issues as they arise and restricts their ability to represent the will of their constituents. The bill is very broad, and we believe there is a vast potential for unintended consequences.

We believe there are far too many potential areas that will be affected that are not seemingly understood and/or defined well in the bill. A few potential issues to rural communities include the following:

- Corporate farming operations and local control of zoning for specific farming operations.
- Taking away the ability of local governments to solve problems through creative means. This could specifically harm future efforts to address food deserts and maintaining local grocery store infrastructure.
- We are unclear on the potential impact to other local government related infrastructure.
- We do not claim to speak for any other organization by any means but we are concerned about our rural hospitals and schools and the potential impact of this bill on nutrition programs they lead.

We currently oppose this bill due to its broad nature, and will stand for questions at the appropriate time.