Dear Kansas legislator,

Greetings! As your constituent, I am writing to let you know about an issue that concerns our community, our state, and is deserving of your support. In recent years, there has been a growing trend of states establishing dedicated funding for conservation. Providing this perennial opportunity for local and private entities to access state match creates a highly competitive edge in receiving federal funds which are at an all-time high. For example, Mississippi established a conservation fund in 2021 and received four times the state investment in federal and private match. Now that Kansas is one of the fifteen states without such a fund, we stand to fall behind many states that don't have near the natural resources.

Outside of the return on investment that a conservation fund generates, it also provides funding into sectors of Kansas life that are currently under funded, if funded at all. Conservation funding supports agriculture, acting as a state-based supplement to the federal Farm Bill that can provide innovative, flexible solutions not available through the bureaucratic USDA systems. Similarly, this type of funding improves the ecosystems of the state that support agriculture, tourism, and recreation. Kansas currently has no grassland conservation programs; a shameful fact given the pride we share in our prairies. Lastly, this opportunity would be a legacy investment in our future generations, creating educational and other lasting programs that would preserve the nature heritage of Kansas for our posterity.

This is a pressing issue as the ideal time to have this funding to capture the maximum federal dollars was yesterday, but a coalition of agriculture, business, and conservation organizations called Kansans for Conservation has drafted an initiative that could be enacted in 2024 so we wouldn't fall farther behind. I ask you to support this effort so that these dollars can have an impact as soon as possible in our parks, prairies, and pastimes. As a taxpayer, these are the type of programs I want my dollars to be spent on. Thank you for your service in the statehouse and please represent the best interests of your district by creating a state conservation fund in 2024.

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