



To: Members of the Kansas Legislative Sportsmen’s Caucus

Re: HB 2456: Establishing the Kansas kids lifetime combination hunting and fishing license

Position: Support as Amended

Date: February 28, 2021

Honorable Members of the Kansas Legislative Sportsmen’s Caucus:

The undersigned write to express support for the amendments made to House Bill 2456 (HB 2456) – a bill that would authorize the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) to create a combination lifetime hunting and angling license for children ages five and younger – and we applaud Representative Corbet for bringing it forward. Likewise, we commend members of the Kansas Legislature for their willingness to work with KDWP to ensure that this type of legislation does not pose any unintended funding consequences that may impair the agency’s ability perform its duties, as well as their desire to enact legislation intended to recruit the next generation of sportsmen and women.

Hunting and angling participation in the United States has generally declined since its peak in the 1980’s. While there have been many causes cited for this decline, the downward trend in participation rates poses a threat not only to our heritage as sportsmen and women, a heritage that is particularly storied in Kansas, but to the future of conservation. Through the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF), a “user pays – public benefits” framework which accounts for nearly 100% of KDWP’s Fish and Wildlife Programs, sportsmen-generated dollars provide the primary source of funding for critical conservation efforts across the Sunflower State. This ASCF is reliant on revenue from sporting licenses (i.e., hunting and angling licenses), and excise tax revenue from both the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs. Recognizing the threat that declining participation poses to our outdoor heritage and the funding that supports the important conservation work performed by KDWP, it is clear that all opportunities to spur renewed interest in participation should be evaluated. HB 2456 seeks to present one such opportunity by authorizing KDWP to offer a relatively affordable lifetime license for youth ages five and younger. This, in turn, could provide adults with an opportunity to invest in the next generation of sportsmen and women.

While providing this affordable option for adults who wish to make this investment is a meritorious concept, we appreciate the steps that have been taken to amend HB 2456 to ensure that unintended negative economic consequences are avoided. First and foremost, we highlight

the amended price at \$300 as a positive step to ensure that lifetime licenses such as these do not result in a significant reduction in license revenue for KDWP. Recognizing that the ASCF is the sole source of revenue needed to support the agency's critical conservation efforts, the ASCF must be preserved by ensuring that the price of this and all licenses permit the agency to accomplish its mission. To achieve this, we support the amended price at \$300 as well as the ability of the KDWP to increase the price, if needed in the future, to protect the ASCF. Likewise, we commend the inclusion of a 10-year sunset provision that will allow the success of this effort to be evaluated and reassessed in the future.

Second, and arguably more importantly from a hunter and angler recruitment and retention perspective, we must be sure that this consideration for the future of our time-honored outdoor traditions does not become a "buy it and forget it" investment. This means that we need mentors in place and adequate access opportunities to ensure that those who receive these licenses are then introduced to hunting and angling when they reach the appropriate age. Research continues to show that, without mentors in place to teach beginning sportsmen and women or suitable places for them to hunt and fish, our efforts to recruit these potential future hunters and anglers are doomed for future failure. KDWP and many other state fish and wildlife agencies are already investing considerable resources in hunter and angler recruitment, retention, and reactivation efforts (collectively referred to as R3), and their knowledge and expertise is critical to ensure that efforts such as this are supported by the best available research on the topic.

With these thoughts in mind, we again applaud the concept proposed by HB 2456 and willingness of the bill's author and co-sponsors to work closely with KDWP to ensure that this and all efforts to recruit, retain, and reactivate sportsmen and women are supported by the best available research in these areas while protecting the critical funding streams that form the pillars of the ASCF. Further, we encourage the Caucus to work with KDWP and members of the sportsmen's community to support R3 efforts by serving as mentors to ensure that our time-honored traditions are shared for generations to come.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Delta Waterfowl
National Deer Association
National Rifle Association
National Wild Turkey Federation
Safari Club International