



**Overland
Park
Chamber™**

To: Representative Leo Delperdang and Members of the House Committee on Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications

**From: Kevin Walker, Executive Vice President & Chief Policy Officer
Overland Park Chamber of Commerce**

Date: 6 February 2024

Chairman Delperdang and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of HB 2527. I present this not as an expert on utilities and the financing thereof. I will leave that to other experts in the room. Our support for this bill stems from a growing concern about the ability of utilities in Kansas to keep pace with electric demand.

Overland Park, Johnson County, and metro Kansas City continue to grow. Our quality of life, multi-modal transportation, and access to highly skilled, well-educated workers position us well for future economic development opportunities and the jobs they create. However, less-than-adequate access to utilities can severely hamper our growth potential. That is why we support HB 2527.

One area of particular concern is the growing interest in the Kansas City area as a hub for data centers. Evergy reports that 203 data centers employing nearly 5,000 workers with an average salary of \$100,000 call their service territory surrounding the Greater Kansas City Metro home.

With this influx of demand, it is critical that Kansas be able to compete for its share of the market. However, to do so, we must have adequate infrastructure in place to support the demand. Unfortunately, our neighbors to the east have created a more investment-friendly environment for Evergy. This disparity makes Missouri a more

attractive place for them to build out their capacity and gives Missouri a competitive advantage along our shared economic border.

We know there are a lot of elements to this bill that require thorough vetting. However, as you work through the mechanics of the bill, we urge the Committee to keep in mind that without the proper tools to build out our energy infrastructure, we may find ourselves at a disadvantage and on the losing end of competitive economic development projects.

We ask the committee to give favorable consideration of HB 2527.