



30 W. Pershing Road
Suite 200
Kansas City, MO 64108
816.221.2121
fax: 816.842.2865

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February 5, 2024

To: Chairman Leo Delperdang and Members of the House Committee on Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications
From: Tim Cowden, President & CEO
Kansas City Area Development Council

I write on behalf of the lead regional economic development organization for the Kansas City area. The Kansas City Area Development Council (KCADC) serves as the sales and marketing team for the two-state, Kansas City region and works closely with our partners across this large geographic footprint. KCADC is consistently recognized as one of the leading economic development groups in the U.S. in large part due to the deep collaboration between multiple community, state, utility organizations and the private sector.

Chairman Delperdang and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of HB 2527. Our support for this bill stems from a growing concern about the ability of utilities in Kansas – half of the KC region we serve – to keep pace with significant demands being placed on our electric utility partner, in particular.

The Kansas City region is on a roll. Major investments are underway or planned in all four corners of our region. 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. The U.S. economy and our regional economies are undergoing a major transformation. Much of this growth is being fueled by electricity – we must have the infrastructure and competitive rates to compete with other regional and state economies.

One area of particular concern is the growing interest in the Kansas City area as hub for data centers, for example. Every 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. Our pipeline is full with mission-critical/data center opportunities, not to mention E/V supply chain and other mega project opportunities attracted, in part, by the successful attraction of Panasonic to De Soto.

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 stress that we must have adequate infrastructure in place to support the demand.

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.

I greatly appreciate your support of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Cowden", is written over the word "Sincerely,".

Tim Cowden
President & CEO
Kansas City Area Development Council