



LIGHTING THE WAY FOR OUR COMMUNITY

DATE: March 3, 2021
FROM: Ottawa Area Chamber of Commerce – John Coen, President/CEO
TO: Kansas House of Representatives Committee on Financial Institutions & Rural Development
RE: **Written Testimony in support of HB 2429**

Thank you for the allowing us this opportunity to provide **testimony on behalf of the Ottawa Area Chamber of Commerce from Ottawa, Kansas supporting HB 2429.**

Most are familiar with the polar weather which hit Kansas in February 2021 that resulted in rolling blackouts and high utility bills in our State. The City of Ottawa is fortunate to own and operate a municipal electric utility. The benefits of ownership were realized the week of February 12 – 19 when our community was able to mitigate additional energy costs incurred as a result generating power to our 13,000 citizens and businesses. This action was necessary to avoid rolling blackouts which many other communities experienced. By generating electricity during this cold snap, we were able to reduce from an estimated \$3.5 million energy bill to \$1.2 million additional costs for the period...still, a \$1.2 million bill is a high price tag for Ottawa citizens and businesses to pay.

House Bill 2429 will provide an urgently needed tool for the municipal electric and gas utilities in responding to a significant financial strain caused by the extreme polar weather event. Additionally, it will help to ensure that monetary reserves do not fall to a dangerous level which will affect the quality of service to our citizens.

We are very appreciative of recognition by the 2021 Kansas Legislature that local government, and the citizens they serve, need assistance to help mitigate problems caused by extreme weather. A low-interest loan program will be of great assistance to the community in moving forward from this very serious and expensive event.

The Ottawa Area Chamber of Commerce and its business members support HB 2429. We strongly urge you to act favorably on House Bill 2429 and recommend it to the Committee as a Whole for affirmative action as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and please feel free to contact me if you need additional information.