

To: House Local Government

From: Amanda L. Stanley, General Counsel

Date: February 3, 2021

RE: Proponent Testimony for HB 2177

We want to thank Chairman Thompson and the Committee members for allowing the League of Kansas Municipalities the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2177.

HB 2177 was originally introduced in the 2020 legislative session as HB 2510. Unfortunately, after passing the House 122-3 and passing the Senate 39-0 with an amendment to include counties, the bill was lost on the one-day veto session when the session abruptly ended due to COVID-19.

In Kansas, we hear a lot about the number of local government units and the need for grassroots consolidation when appropriate; however, it is extremely difficult for consolidation to occur. Under current law, even when it is in the city's and the special district's best interest to consolidate, consolidation takes an act of the legislature. There is no universal statute for special district consolidation.

To proactively seek ways to make this process easier, the League looked to see if other states had a uniform statute allowing for special district consolidation. What we learned from the National Conference of State Legislatures is that it appears no other state has addressed this issue. We then looked at Kansas law to see if there were any current statutes that could be used as a starting point. We found several statutes allowing for an individual special district's consolidation into a city used similar language. HB 2177 is an evolution of these current Kansas laws. Under the new Act, when it is in the best interest of the city and the special district to consolidate, both the city and the special district will adopt a joint resolution indicating their desire to merge. There will then be a joint public hearing to give the citizens of the community the opportunity to weigh in on the proposal. If, following the public hearing, both governing bodies decide to proceed with the proposal, the city will adopt an ordinance dissolving the special district and assuming all powers, responsibilities, and duties of the special district.

We feel HB 2177 is an innovative concept while also being a natural evolution of Kansas law to allow more efficiencies in government at the local level. We respectfully ask this Committee to pass out HB 2177 to the full House for its consideration.