



**Kansas Grain and Feed Association
Renew Kansas Association**

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March 12, 2019

To: Senate Committee on Utilities
From: Randy E. Stookey, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs

Re: **Proponent, Joint Written Testimony on Senate Bill 198, authorizing the state corporation commission to issue securitized ratepayer-backed bonds for electric generation facilities**

Chairman Masterson and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 198. This testimony is submitted jointly on behalf of the Kansas Grain and Feed Association (KGFA) and Renew Kansas Association. KGFA is the state association of the grain receiving, storage, processing and shipping industry in Kansas, whose membership represents 99% of the commercially licensed grain storage across Kansas. Renew Kansas Association is the trade association of the Kansas ethanol and biofuels industry.

The Kansas ethanol industry includes 10 fuel-grade ethanol processing plants in mostly rural areas across the state. By purchasing 44% of all corn grown in Kansas (179.2 mil bushels in 2016) the ethanol industry is an economic driver for Kansas agriculture. The demand for ethanol inputs serves as a price support for corn and sorghum for Kansas farmers. The Kansas ethanol industry produces 550 million gallons of ethanol annually worth approximately \$900 million. Each ethanol plant employs, on average, 45 workers at an average salary of over \$59,000. Collectively, the industry pays close to \$9.0 million annually in property taxes.

Grain elevators and ethanol plants are high industrial users of energy that generally operate on tight margins. Profitability in any given year is highly dependent on the costs of inputs such as energy.

Recent reports have shown that Kansas has the highest energy costs in the Midwest. Paying higher energy rates than similarly-situated energy users in neighboring states causes processing plants and grain elevators in our state to be less competitive. As our members operate continually, and are charged at peak use rates, those high costs have become unsustainable.

Our understanding is that Senate Bill 198 would authorize the issuance of low-cost securitized ratepayer-backed bonds. Proceeds from these bonds could be used to lower rates paid by electric utility customers by reducing financing costs of certain retired electric generating facilities and related costs. If this bill could provide some measureable rate relief to our industries, then we would fully support this effort.

Kansas must act now to find a solution to the issue of high energy rates, or industries in our state will continue to suffer. If we are to allow Kansas industries to be competitive, we must find a way for industry to access energy at rates that are not cost prohibitive.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 198.