



PROPONENT

**Written-Only Testimony for SB 167
Senate Committee on Transportation
Feb. 24, 2021**

**Submitted by
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**On Behalf of
Kansas City Board of Public Utilities (BPU)
Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (KEC)
Evergy
Kansas Municipal Utilities (KMU)
Black Hills Energy
Kansas Gas Service
Kansas Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. (KEPCo)
Sunflower Electric Power Corp.
Atmos Energy**

Chairman Petersen, Vice Chair Claeys, Ranking Member Hawk and Committee members: The electric and gas utilities appreciate the opportunity to share support for SB 167, which allows for certain public utility motor vehicles to be authorized as emergency vehicles without a designation by county commissioners.

The utility interests noted above care deeply about employee safety, and believe SB167 adds one more layer of protection for utility employees in the field who every day are responding to service calls throughout Kansas. Their work often occurs on busy streets, roads and highways and very often in inclement weather or at night while making emergency repairs. In 2017, the Missouri legislature passed a "move-over" law, SB 222, which requires drivers approaching a utility vehicle with flashing lights, such as an electric or gas company repair truck, to vacate the lane closest to the vehicle if it is possible, or slow to a safe speed.

With increasing incidences of driver inattentiveness, we believe that any measure that can draw attention to utility worker safety on roadways in Kansas is worth consideration. Any of the entities listed above would likely be able to share stories of close calls or even injuries to employees when motorists failed to recognize the presence of a utility service vehicle making repairs or responding to emergencies. For example, in Topeka last year, an Evergy employee was involved in an accident where a motorist rear-ended the bucket truck he was just getting into to make repairs to an electrical line.

We hope that by making it a bit easier for public utility vehicles to be considered emergency vehicles in certain situations that our workers will be safer in the field. This bill recognizes the contributions utility workers make daily to provide vital services to their communities. As such, we support SB 167 and thank you for considering this measure.

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