



Testimony in Support of House Bill 2302

Presented by Joshua Svaty

On Behalf of the Regional Economic Area Partnership (REAP)

February 14th, 2023

Mr. Chairman, Madame Vice Chairman, Madame Ranking Minority, members of the House Water Committee, thank you for allowing us to appear before you this morning. I am here today to speak on behalf of the Regional Economic Area Partnership of South Central Kansas, known to most of you as REAP. REAP is the coalition of over 30 cities and counties in South Central Kansas, as well as affiliate members, that are dedicated to building a strong, vibrant economic climate through cooperation within the region. REAP rises in support of House Bill 2302.

REAP focuses on the framework of services that create a world-class economic development and investment climate in south-central Kansas. To that end, our initiatives at the state level are usually designed around workforce development, training, and education; housing; and infrastructure. The recently announced APEX project with Integra highlights all of these issues as we jump into action to make sure our region can supply 2,000 new jobs.

However, we also know that businesses relocating from other parts of the country need to know that they have a stable and long-term water supply. In fact, they are frequently relocating because their current location could no longer guarantee that water supply. If we want to be economically competitive, we cannot have long-term problems at the community level when it comes to water infrastructure. Water infrastructure upgrades are typically needed with large new economic developments, and businesses need to know that the communities have the capacity to make those upgrades and a regulatory system that can get them accomplished in a timely fashion.

Without a dedicated state water plan that is actually funded in the manner it needs to be funded, south central Kansas risks adding water to the list of liabilities rather than assets when we present ourselves to potential investors and outside businesses. Our communities and local governments charged with providing safe drinking water, wastewater, stormwater and other water infrastructure services need to know that they can provide for growth when it is presented to them. A water plan fund gives them the tools to build those systems so that when the next Integra - whether home-grown or from out-of-state – comes with an opportunity, we can be ready.

REAP urges passage of HB 2302 and would also urge the committee to take this bipartisan enthusiasm and carry it forward to other House Members so they understand how important the water issue has become for all Kansans.

Thank you and we will stand for questions.