

Senate Committee on Utilities**Testimony in Support to House Bill 2527****Presented by Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs, Kansas Chamber****Monday, March 18, 2024**

Mister Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Eric Stafford, Vice President of Government Affairs for the Kansas Chamber. The Kansas Chamber represents small, medium and large businesses of all industry segments across the state. We appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 2527, a bill introduced by Evergy to modify the state's regulatory climate. HB 2527 was amended significantly from its original version we believed to be to the detriment of Kansas ratepayers.

As introduced, the Chamber stood in opposition to the bill out of concern for the negative impact to ratepayers in several provisions of the bill. It has been no secret that Kansas ratepayers, and our members, have been frustrated with high electricity rates. Our ratepayer members have given us a clear and strong message to take whatever steps necessary to help bring Kansas back into a competitive position on rates. We have increased our engagement not only at the statehouse on policy decisions, but also for the first time in my 13 years at the Chamber, we intervened in an Evergy rate case before the Kansas Corporation Commission.

However, we would like to take this opportunity to thank representatives from Evergy and other stakeholder groups to negotiate a bill that serves as a win-win for the state's public utility and for ratepayer interests. As drafted, the initial four proposed changes under the bill would have had an adverse effect on ratepayers. But after extensive, positive talks among interested parties, we are pleased with the ratepayer protections added to the bill, while also addressing economic development provisions, and financing provisions for Evergy to secure necessary capital for future investment to meet growing electricity demands in the state.

In closing, we are grateful for the work by industry experts and representatives to accomplish a well-balanced bill that satisfies concerns expressed during the original hearing, and we are happy to express our support for the bill today. Thank you for opportunity to testify in support of HB 2527 and I'm happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.