



**Neutral Testimony on House Bill 2697**  
Presented by Joshua Svaty  
**On Behalf of the Regional Economic Area Partnership (REAP)**  
February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Good morning Mr. Chairman, Madame Vice-Chair and Madame Ranking Member and members of the House Water Committee, thank you for allowing the Regional Economic Area Partnership (REAP) to provide neutral testimony on House Bill 2697 dealing with the authority of the Groundwater Management Districts. REAP is the association of local governments and businesses of south-central Kansas working to provide the workforce, infrastructure, and planning required for our region to continue to be an economic engine for the State.

House Bill 2697 addresses an issue this committee has had hearings on in past sessions that remains a top legislative priority for REAP and its membership. Within the Water Appropriation Act much authority has been delegated to the Chief Engineer of the Division of Water Resources. When the Groundwater Management District Act was passed by the Kansas Legislature in the early 1970s some 25 years after the Water Appropriation Act, other authority was granted to the Groundwater Management Districts (GMDs). HB 2697 clarifies a particular part of the GMD Act – saying that rather than providing *advice and assistance* to the Chief Engineer in section (m), GMDs would provide *relevant information*.

REAP has testified on this issue in the past because at times when communication is not as strong between the GMDs and other local units of government, “advice and assistance” can sometimes become a regulatory hurdle that stretches into unknown timeframes on large municipal or economic development projects. These points of confusion do not exist for member units of government that are outside GMDs and can work directly with the Chief Engineer at the Division of Water Resources.

REAP is neutral on HB 2687 because after the past few years of raising this issue the parties involved in south central Kansas, including GMD2, have been working toward finding a solution to these communication breakdowns. We support that effort and look forward to a more seamless regulatory environment with clear timeframes and

outcomes. However, it is important the committee continue to look at all the ways in which there may be regulatory dissonance and keep those ideas in mind as we all work to have a better, clearer water policy framework for the future. We appreciate this issue being brought forward for discussion and would stand for questions.