

March 14, 2019

Testimony in Support of a Hearing for House Bill 2317

House Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications Committee

Chairman – Representative Joe Seiwert

Vice Chair – Representative Mark Schreiber

Ranking Minority – Representative Annie Kuether

Committee Members

Good morning Mr. Chair and members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to reach out to you in support for a hearing for House Bill 2317, which is commonly referred to as the Urban Transmission Lines Bill. There has not been any significant legislative updates in over 40 years to the statutes regulating utility companies. With technology advances made in recent years, it would be not only moral but ethical for companies to make citizens aware of technology being installed in their communities. The recent installation of transmission poles in the yards of citizens in Wichita, KS highlights the need for better transparency and communication which can only happen if legislation is passed to enforce these expectations.

House Bill 2317 would amend existing law concerning electric transmission lines to create the definition of an “urban electric transmission line” and to add urban electric transmission lines to all references to electric transmission lines. The bill would also require any electric utility to acquire a siting permit from the Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC) prior to beginning site preparation for either type of line, and as the KCC makes its decision with respect to the need for and reasonableness of the location of the proposed line, it must also consider the local aesthetics, location, environment and population density of the proposed site; as well as hold public hearings so that citizens are made aware of proposed new technology.

In 2018, Westar Utility installed 57, 105 feet tall transmission lines in the front yards of homeowners in a primarily African American community in Wichita, KS. The home owners, the neighbors and the community in whole is dealing with the aftermath of home depreciation, home displacement and possible future health ramifications due to 100 ft transmissions poles having been installed in their yards. As a concerned activist and citizen, I fully support House Bill 2317 and I ask you to do the same.

Thank you,

LaWanda DeShazer

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