

Proponent Verbal Testimony – SB 69
Dorothy Barnett, Clean Energy Business Council
February 20, 2019

Chairman Masterson and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you again about our Kansas energy future. I'm Dorothy Barnett, the executive director of the Clean Energy Business Council, a program of the Climate + Energy Project, which I also direct.

The Clean Energy Business Council (CEBC) represents more than 20 businesses and organizations who are all focused on advancing the clean energy economy and growing their businesses in Kansas. Members represent energy efficiency, solar, wind, electrical supply companies, manufacturers, chambers, nonprofits, and even the US Army. In addition to their commitment to the advanced energy economy, they all are impacted by electricity rates and concerned about our rate competitiveness.

We've actively sought a comprehensive study for more than a year and are pleased to stand before you today in support for SB 69. We are not seeking information to determine if our rates are competitive. We know they're not. SB 69 provides an independent assessment of the rate-making process, the impacts of transmission investments, how refinancing utility stranded assets could benefit ratepayers, as well as the role of clean energy, and how emerging technologies could transform the way we use and deliver power.

We're particularly interested in finding out if there is an opportunity to lower electric rates with securitization; how money saved by refinancing utility assets that are no longer being fully utilized could be used to provide training for displaced workers or fund energy efficiency programs for low and moderate-income populations.

The bill also looks at the role of advanced energy and, importantly, "other consequential energy issues materially affecting Kansas electricity rates," in Section 1D. It's important to get an independent assessment of electric vehicles and their potential to lower fixed costs for everyone if it means the sale of more power. Further, with new and cheaper technologies driving energy choices each day, a study of advanced energy solutions has never been more timely.

The fact that the study will be completed by an independent third party is critically important to our support of this bill. While we've always maintained a commitment to work together with all parties, it's appropriate that those of us in the energy sector are not reviewing our own work. An independent, unbiased, third-party study is the suitable approach.

All in all, SB 69 is precisely the kind of comprehensive study we need to kickstart the important work we need to do in the state to plan for our energy future.

I want to be clear – we do support this bill in its current language. But as we've testified here before, we believe this is only a necessary first step.

Armed with comprehensive data from this study, we must then act.

Every single stakeholder in this room – you as Senators, us as clean energy advocates, our industrial partners, the Citizens Utility Ratepayers Board, the KCC, the utilities, cooperatives, municipalities, and others should take this study and come together as part of a robust and transparent stakeholder engagement process to inform a Kansas Energy Plan that puts us on track to responsibly, fairly, and efficiently plan for our future energy needs in a way that is mindful of costs and benefits.

SB 69 is the beginning of a meaningful dialogue among all interested parties for how best to meet energy needs in a world that's rapidly changing with technological advances and increased demands for access to renewable power.

The Clean Energy Business Council has always stood for finding common ground and advancing ideas that lead to cleaner energy options. We support the passage of SB 69 and look forward to using the information received to advance a comprehensive State Energy Plan, much like we've done in Kansas with our State Water Plan.