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Rev. Sarah Oglesby-Dunegan, Board Chair**

Written Testimony in Support of SB 69 – Electricity Rate Study Bill Senate Utilities Committee, Sen. Ty Masterson, chair

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee –

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill.

My name is Rabbi Moti Rieber, and I am the executive director of Kansas Interfaith Action, a statewide, multi-faith issue advocacy organization that tries to bring a moral voice to Kansas public policy by educating, engaging and advocating on behalf of people of faith and the public regarding critical social, economic, and climate justice issues.

One of our main issue areas is climate disruption, which is an issue with strong moral implications. On the one hand, we are not caring for Creation in the way that we are supposed to, and on the other, climate disruption will affect poor people and people of color worst and first, which makes climate change a justice issue. These are the same people who are already most disadvantaged by Kansas' high utility rates.

I bring this up because unfortunately in Kansas, not only not do we not have any policy on this issue, but in most cases we don't even have a forum in which to discuss it. But just because we don't want to talk about it, doesn't mean it isn't happening, or that it won't have major effects on Kansas' population and economy. Ramifications of climate change in Kansas will include changes in the arability of land, limitations in water availability, record number of heat events, flood and drought, changes in growing seasons, and more.

We have a short amount of time to build a major response to climate disruption, which must include a plan to transition rapidly away from fossil fuels and toward a carbon-free energy sector.

I want to give the IOUs credit for the commitment to wind energy they have shown over the past 10 years. Kansas is a leader in this industry and that is to the good, and it has put us a long way toward decarbonizing our energy sector. On the other hand, IOUs in particular are far too powerful in making Kansas' energy policy. Because they are motivated by shareholder profits, they have little incentive to lead a transition that might impact their bottom line.

That's why we need a comprehensive study on Kansas' energy rates. With this study we have the opportunity to do two things: the first is bring transparency to the rate-making process by studying the factors that have led to the high energy prices we see now.

But that's not enough, and at this stage we don't just need another study; we need to plan for the future, and what's missing from this bill is what happens after the study. We need the study to lead directly into the development of a state energy plan, with a full discussion among all stakeholders as to how Kansas can and should power itself in the medium term and how, specifically, we will transition to a low carbon economy – sooner rather than later.

I know you will hear SB 181 tomorrow, I don't plan to testify on that one. We support the idea of a task force but there have to be more voices to represent interests other than large energy providers and industrial consumers. We certainly don't support study as a way to further postpone action. We've done that long enough already.

Kansas Interfaith Action advocates policy that will move Kansas toward not just studying, but addressing the challenge of climate change – both its causes and its effects. We support the study in SB 69, but we also believe that studies are not enough: We need action. We hope that as you work SB 69 you will consider ways to design what will happen after the study to move Kansas strongly in the direction of a clean energy future.

Thank you for your attention.