



Osawatomi Unified School District #367

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To: House Financial Institutions and Rural Development
From: Justin Burchett, USD 367 Superintendent
Date: March 3, 2021
RE: Testimony in Support of City Utility Low-Interest Program

Justin Burchett,
Superintendent

School Board Members

DJ Needham,
President

Gordon Schrader
Vice President

Marsha Adams

Josh Barnett

Jeff Dorsett

Kristal Powell

Ben Wendt

As households, businesses and municipalities were impacted by the extreme weather event of mid-February, so were the school districts of Kansas. Weather forced the closure of our district on February 12th, 16th and 17th. We were lucky to have already scheduled February 15th off in honor of Presidents' Day. While our students were home with their families, they were being asked to conserve energy while also facing historic cold temperatures. The District's decision to not open on the 17th of February was partially driven by a call from our city to conserve energy and water consumption. The District tries to work very closely with our city, as we consume 14% of their electrical output, and remained closed that day.

Once we reopened buildings, we started to see the financial impact of the extreme weather. Just like our families, who were struggling with failed furnaces and frozen pipes, the District also faced mechanical failures, frozen pipes and had to perform repairs to HVAC systems damaged by two hard failures of our municipal electric grid. We will have spent tens of thousands of dollars fixing HVAC systems, doors that no longer will close due to swelling concrete slabs, and water leaks to return to normal operations.

Now, we are expecting even more financial stress on our budget. Our city has alerted residents and businesses to expect significantly elevated electrical bills for the next month. It is possible that our electric bill will be six to seven times higher, making our monthly bill almost \$200,000. At least I am grateful that my city is reaching out and making the District aware of this unbudgeted expense. We have been unable to find anticipated gas bill increases from our provider, but a neighboring district has been warned to expect monthly bills that are thirty to forty times higher than normal.

Therefore, I am writing this letter in support of any action that the Kansas Legislature can take to lessen the impact these exponential rate increases will have upon Kansans. As a school leader of a high poverty district, I worry about our families and whether they will be able to absorb utility bills that are significantly above their norms.

Justin Burchett, USD 367 Superintendent