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**House Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications Committee**  
**House Bill 2156 – Support (Written Only)**  
**February 9, 2023**

Thank you, Chair Delperdang and members of the committee, for the opportunity to provide comments today on House Bill 2156. Black Hills Energy is a natural gas utility proudly serving approximately 122,000 customers in 67 Kansas communities. Altogether, the Black Hills Energy family serves 1.3 million natural gas and electric customers in eight states.

Black Hills Energy thanks the proponent and stakeholders for the collaborative discussions on this topic. House Bill 2156 provides utilities a voluntary option to propose a low-income rate, terms or charges during a regulatory rate review. To ensure a program has the long-term efficiency necessary to accomplish the goals of this legislation, Black Hills Energy believes that voluntary programs, customized by the offering utility, provide the best path to success.

If the changes in HB 2156 are enacted, there will be further stakeholder conversations necessary about potential program design and, pending regulatory approval, implementation. This includes determining the scope of participant eligibility limits and consideration of possible impacts on all residential customers.

Energy assistance programs provide an opportunity to assist low-income customers in staying current on energy bills and maintaining service. Black Hills Energy has a long track record of supporting federal funding for LIHEAP. Additionally, Black Hills Cares helps eligible customers in need pay their Black Hills Energy bills or emergency energy-related expenses. The program uses voluntary tax-deductible donations from our customers and employees. We match those contributions dollar for dollar.

Black Hills Energy proactively communicates with customers to share energy saving tips ahead of cold weather. Customers who need help managing their bills are encouraged to enroll in Budget Billing, a free payment plan that averages the amount owed each month. This budget option supports customers looking to avoid the seasonal increases in bills that result from higher energy use during extreme weather by averaging out their usage over a 12-month period. Customers can also call United Way's 211 for information on Kansas energy assistance programs.

As policymakers and stakeholders consider the merits of HB 2156, Black Hills Energy remains a partner in these discussions. Thank you.