



TESTIMONY

TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

**FROM: SCOTT HEIDNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES OF KANSAS (ACEC KS)**

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KANSAS SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS (KSPE)**

RE: HB 2302

DATE: MARCH 15, 2023

Chairman Kerschen, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2302.

We submit these joint remarks on behalf of ACEC KS, the trade association representing private consulting engineering companies in Kansas, and KSPE, the professional association representing licensed engineers in Kansas.

ACEC KS and KSPE support the passage of HB 2302, and we would like to focus on three specific policy areas where HB 2302 will work to the benefit of our state.

First, the state has serious water infrastructure needs which far outstrip the funds available under the current system. This situation is growing more acute with each passing year for a variety of reasons. Water shortages and aging infrastructure are not being addressed as quickly as they develop. Inflation is eroding the

purchasing power of the dollars which are appropriated. The significant increase in total funding provided by HB 2302 would go a long way to shrinking this backlog of time sensitive needs.

Second, HB 2302 provides a multiyear funding plan as opposed to the year-by-year funding in place currently. When state and local units of government have certainty about future funding streams, it increases their ability to be forward-looking and make important commitments. The same is true of private industry as they are forced to make decision with long-term consequences about investing in personnel and equipment to deliver services for water infrastructure. The certainty which comes with a multiyear funding source will be a catalyst to both public and private sector entities to commit to these important investments.

Finally, the bill will allow state agencies to increase pay in certain circumstances for critical agency personnel, including engineers. The state has struggled to recruit and retain the necessary number of professionals to maximize the efficient delivery of services. This is not a reflection of any shortcoming on the part of state agencies, but a simple reflection of the struggle to compete with the private sector at current salary realities. This bill will work to address this problem, which is supported by both our public and private sector members.

Passage of HB 2302 will be a tremendous forward-looking investment in the future of our state and arguably its most precious natural resource. We applaud those who have worked to craft and amend this legislation to get it to the point it is today, and we encourage you to vote yes.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.