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TO: Chairman Mike Thompson
Senate Federal & State Affairs Committee Members

FROM: Amy L. Lange, City Manager, Concordia

DATE: February 19, 2024

RE: Written Only - Testimony in Opposition to SB 474 – Administrative Ordinance Restrictions

Chairman Thompson and Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 474 on behalf of the City of Concordia. Concordia has a long history of strong, informed, and common-sense leadership in our elected and appointed officials. We strive to ensure our community is a great place to live, work and play. Administrative ordinances are key to ensuring the health and safety of our residents, and to execute existing laws. SB 474 would remove the administrative ordinance restrictions from K.S.A 12-3013, meaning citizen petitions could now be used to overturn administrative ordinances. This could create significant disruption to basic services.

Concordia uses administrative ordinances for a variety of services managed by the City, including but not limited to:

- Adoption of Ordinances Related to Public Works Facilities – Concordia recently completed an improvement project to its wastewater treatment plant, which brought it into compliance with current KDHE regulations, addressed obsolete components, connected the entire plant to an emergency generator, and provided a modern eco-friendly means of sludge disposal. This process required passage of administrative ordinances to assess fees to water bills and to issue bonds to pay for this project. Passage of SB 474 may result in the unintended consequence of disallowing cities to maintain safe operation of their water and wastewater facilities.
- Establishment of City Departments – Concordia operates a Police Department, Fire/EMS Department, Utilities Department, Public Works Department, Community Development Department, Parks & Recreation Department, and Administration Department. Each of these departments are critical to provide necessary services to our community. Passage of SB 474 may result in the unintended consequence of elimination of one or more of these departments, thereby compromising the health and safety of our community, including the operation of water and wastewater facilities, maintenance of streets, enforcement of building codes, and response to emergency situations and enforcement of laws.
- Adoption Condemnation Ordinances – Unsafe and dangerous structures create potentially hazardous situations for neighborhoods, including potential for life-threatening injuries from fires, squatters, or curious passers-by. Passage of SB 474 may result in the unintended consequence of increased blight and unsafe and dangerous situations in Kansas neighborhoods, which will have a subsequent and negative impact on recruitment of residents and jobs to our communities.
- Fees for Services – Cities regularly adopt fee schedules for services provided to residents, including utility fees, building permit fees, licensing fees, etc. These fees for service are only charged to users of services, and help to reduce reliance on property tax revenue for cities to operate. Passage of SB 474 may have the unintended consequence of increased property taxes in order for cities to continue to provide basic services residents have come to expect.

With this testimony in mind, the City of Concordia strongly urges you to oppose SB 474 and to continue to conduct local business in a manner most effective for the residents of our community. Thank you for consideration.

Amy L. Lange
City Manager

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amy Lange".