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Vice President
Power Delivery

February 4, 2013

Senate Education Committee
SB 22 - Extension of the postsecondary technical education Authority
February 6, 2013

Chairman Abrams and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Bruce Akin, and I am Vice President Power Delivery for Westar Energy. I also have the opportunity to serve on the Technical Education Committee and I want to express my support of SB 22.

Westar Energy is the largest electric utility in Kansas, employing over 2,300 employees. Our company, along with the rest of the industry is facing an unprecedented number of retirements over the next few years. Over half of our employees will be eligible for retirement in the next 10 years. We have already experienced an increase in the number of retirements in the last couple of years. A large portion of our workforce is comprised of highly skilled craft workers. These crafts cover everything from line-workers to power plant specialists to substation technicians. Many of our crafts require apprenticeships before employees are fully qualified in their field but our experience has been that when we hire people that have pursued technical education prior to beginning their employment with us the success rate is much higher.

I would like to express my support for the extension of the Postsecondary Technical Education Authority (TEA). The TEA has made significant progress in the delivery of technical education in Kansas, the most significant of which is aligning business and industry with the institutions providing technical education. This alignment is driving to more industry recognized credentials that is delivering a more consistent and qualified workforce for Kansas industry. The TEA is driving that partnership and that is essential to the success of technical education and the success of Kansas business and industry. The TEA continues to work to ensure the success of the Governor's Career Technical Education initiatives which are being driven down to the high school level with great interest. However, there is still a considerable amount of work to be accomplished including implementing program outcome metrics for funding purposes.

I would like to thank you for your time and attention to this matter and respectfully request your support for SB 22 to continue the momentum generated by the TEA and the successful implementation of the system improvements that are underway.

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