

To: House Committee on Commerce

From: Brent Snyder, Branch Manager, Midwest Elevator

Re: In-Person Oral Opponent: HB2826

Date: March 19, 2024

Chairman Tarwater and members of the Committee,

Good afternoon, my name is Brent Snyder and I'm the Branch Manager for Midwest Elevator, an independent elevator contractor in Kansas. Back in 2022 when I first heard about the State of Kansas finally passing legislation to help regulate the elevator industry I was very excited. Not because of any sort of financial gain, but because I knew first hand the drastic improvement it would bring to public safety. It was long overdue and Kansas was decades behind many states in adopting similar legislation.

Throughout my 25 year career in this industry, I've worked in 5 different states and Kansas is the only state I've worked in that did not have any oversight of commercial elevator and escalator equipment. After reading through the initial bill that passed back in 2022, I jumped at the opportunity to join the Kansas Elevator Safety Advisory Board. I'm proud to say that I've been serving on the board since its inception.

I'm here today to express my concern about the changes that have been proposed to the original bill. The modifications being presented will have a negative impact on public safety in the State of Kansas. There are many Kansas residents who rely on this equipment to get them to their destinations within both publicly and privately owned facilities. Most people just assume these elevators are safe and have been properly inspected, however, I can assure you that without the oversight provided with original version of the legislation, that is not the case. I've personally surveyed elevators in Kansas over the past 15 years and have come across hundreds of elevators that are past due on safety inspections, some of which had not had a safety inspection in over a decade which is completely unacceptable.

What is a safety inspection and why is it important? The elevator industry is guided by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers 17.1 Safety Code for Elevators and Escalators. This code helps set minimum safety requirements for vertical transportation. Included within the code is that all vertical transportation equipment must receive a safety test on an annual basis, and in some cases the equipment receives a more stringent full capacity weight test every 5 years.

These safety tests are critical to public safety because many of the components can only be checked during these annual inspections. There are times when we discover the failure of a safety component during these tests, and speaking on behalf of everyone in the elevator industry, I can assure you that all of us want to find and correct these deficiencies during the annual safety inspection as opposed to a failure while passengers are riding the equipment causing potential harm to the individuals.

It is important to understand that preventative maintenance programs do not test all the life safety components. Maintenance programs focus more on the reliability of keeping the elevators and escalators operational by performing such tasks as routine cleaning, adjusting, and lubricating of elevator components. The only way to thoroughly test the safety components, as required by national code, is through a safety test performed by a 1 qualified licensed elevator mechanic and assisted by another qualified elevator mechanic or apprentice. Due to the dangers of working on elevators, it can take up to 5 years of on the job training and 4 years of classroom learning before an apprentice is even eligible to take a very challenging exam that they must pass before they can become a journeyman mechanic.

Please understand that the process of performing these annual and 5 year full load safety inspections are absolutely critical to the safety of the riding public. Examples of what are only tested during these annual safety inspections are: Hydraulic pressurization of the entire system to verify there are no leaks, especially in the underground cylinder which doesn't allow for visual inspection. Verifying this on an annual basis is important because most hydraulic elevators do not have a braking mechanism, so should a catastrophic failure occur the elevator may potential drop all the way to the ground without slowing down. Other components tested only during these safety tests are: Governors which are used to make sure elevators are not overspeeding. Safeties which will stop the elevator if an elevator does overspeed. And secondary brakes which are designed to prevent the elevator from crashing into the overhead of the hoistway.

There are thousands of serious injuries that occur on vertical transportation equipment every year in the United States. It is of critical importance that all elevators and escalators conform to the national ASME A17.1 Safety Code for Elevators and Escalators to help prevent these serious injuries and fatalities. I can say with 100% certainty that the changes to the elevator safety bill that are being presented today will negatively impact those fatality and serious injury statistics. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today.