



*Testimony Submitted to the*  
**House Water Committee**  
February 6, 2024

*Katie Miller, Director of Water Services*  
*Kansas Municipal Utilities*

### **Testimony in Support of HB 2633**

Kansas Municipal Utilities (KMU) is the statewide association representing Kansas cities and other public or not-for-profit organizations involved in the ownership and operation of publicly owned utilities across Kansas. Formed in 1928, KMU provides assistance and information to members with regard to workforce training and educational programs, mutual aid, regulatory and legislative assistance and numerous other services toward the advancement of municipal utilities to achieve maximum benefits for the customer-owners served by our utilities. Our membership ranges in size from some of the largest utilities in the state such as those operated by the Kansas City Board of Public Utilities and the City of Wichita down to some of the smallest utility systems serving fewer than 100 customers.

Kansas Municipal Utilities, on behalf of its members and the nearly 900 utilities served across the State of Kansas, supports HB 2633. Water and wastewater utility operators embody the pride, grit and lifeblood of every Kansas community, regardless of population or size. They are professional individuals with a call to public service, impacting the public health of every community member in the area they serve. These individuals strive to be well educated, well trained, and certified at the highest levels necessary, not only to ensure their own competency, but for the ongoing compliance and sustainability of their utility and community. To maintain a standard of excellence in operator certification, aligning with nearly every other state in the nation, Kansas needs to make key changes to the current state statute.

The Kansas operator certification program has operated with fees set in the 1970s. Those funds are absorbed into the state general fund (SGF) which ultimately results in no funds being specifically dedicated to the improvement, relevancy and upkeep of the operator certification exams. With the current hiring crisis and inability to backfill open operator positions, this is a critical call to action.

- Water and wastewater operator certification fees collected need to be deposited, in their entirety, into the water program management fund. It is critical these fees be located in the proper fund for dedicated use benefiting the operator certification program, in turn, benefiting the operators, utilities, and customers of every public water and wastewater utility in the state.
- The individual operator examination fee of \$25, which was established in the 1970's, clearly needs to be lifted, to meet and not exceed the cost of operator examinations. This necessary and welcomed change will enable utilizing current, relevant, standardized and quality-controlled online exams, aiding in better exam preparation, more localized access to online exams, resulting in more individuals passing operator certification exams.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these comments.