

**TESTIMONY TO THE TEXAS SENATE SUPPORTING SB 76
AN ACT RELATING TO THE SECURITY OF THE ELECTRIC GRID
April 11, 2019**

The Honorable Brian Birdwell, Chair
The Honorable Judith Zaffirini, Vice Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Economic Development

I am Richard Krieg, President of the Krieg Group, a Williamson County, Texas firm focused on policy analysis in the healthcare and public health sector. In this capacity, I have led FEMA-funded projects to develop healthcare strategies for the National Capital Region associated with large-scale terrorist events. I am former Commissioner of Health for the City of Chicago, and was Director of Policy Analysis and Planning for the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council, the association of 140 Chicago-area hospitals.

As Governor Abbott recently stated, it is essential that the legislature “make Texas more resilient to future disasters” by “making disaster response an emergency item.” This view was underscored by President Trump two weeks ago in his Executive Order on Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP). Through that action, the President put EMP resilience on an emergency footing - with all Federal deliverables due at the 3- and 6-month marks.

President Trump’s decisive action follows years of Federal inertia when it comes to national policy to protect the electric grid. Central to the President’s plan is to “promote collaboration and facilitate information sharing . . . among departments and agencies, the owners and operators of critical infrastructure, and other relevant stakeholders.” [Executive Order on Coordinating National Resilience to Electromagnetic Pulses, White House, March 26, 2019; Sec. 3(B)]

I strongly support SB 76 - which provides a framework to accomplish this through the proposed Grid Security Council’s membership. It is mission critical that the Council include the parties listed in the Bill - and that it actively monitor technological developments and economic opportunities related to Texas power grid security.

In its March 2019 “Energy Trends Across State Legislatures Report,” the National Conference of State Legislatures emphasized the challenges facing state policymakers in this high-tech, rapidly changing arena.

A robust Grid Security Council would ensure that the Texas Legislature has an onboard source of high caliber, policy relevant information to increase the resilience of our electric grid.

Six months prior to Hurricane Harvey, Houston and Galveston emergency managers, first responders, hospital officials, the Coast Guard and others participated in a full-day exercise to assess how they would respond to a regional grid down event. Convened by Senator Bob Hall, the event was held at the TranStar Center, site of Houston’s Emergency Operations Center and the Harris County Office of Homeland Security. I was the exercise evaluator.

The meeting clearly showed that in grappling with power grid issues, emergency managers, first responders, the military and other parties must be involved in examining vulnerabilities associated with long-term power outages and developing strategies to mitigate these threats.

Texas has more hospitals than any other state. Most of these facilities have migrated to an almost completely paperless, electronic operation. Here in Texas, life critical hospital care, e.g. emergency rooms, life support systems, and operating rooms, generally have full power backup for only 3 days. As a large state with a dispersed population – complex healthcare is increasingly being delivered in community settings, most with no power back-up.

Given these factors, I urge you to consider having representation of Texas hospitals and the State's public health leadership on the Council. Expertise from other critical infrastructure sectors would also be welcome.

Texas healthcare providers have been leaders in supporting new technology and medical innovation. In both the healthcare and public health agency settings, being proactive is the new normal. This includes addressing threats attributable to natural disasters and securing health information platforms from cyberattack.

An energy resilient health sector would produce significant dividends for the State. Houston's Texas Medical Center has received widespread acclaim for providing uninterrupted care during Hurricane Harvey due to its microgrid power capability.

In the future, states and regions capable of mitigating disaster risk will enjoy significant competitive advantages. If Texas promoted the survivability of healthcare and public health through power grid resilience, it would impact business recruitment and retention as well as future military investment.

As the only State with its own electric grid Interconnection, Texas is positioned to be the place where President Trump and State leaders can join forces in this important area of national security.

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