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**Prepared Testimony by Rep. David Steffen before the
Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities
Assembly Bill 547-Trespass and damage to energy utility property
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Chairman Kuglitsch and fellow committee members,

Thank you for scheduling a public hearing for Assembly Bill 547. This bipartisan bill designates that the crime of damaging energy utility property with the **intent to cause substantial disruption of service** is a Class H felony. This bill also creates a new crime of criminal trespass to an energy utility property, which would also be classified as a Class H felony.

Most of us go about our days giving little thought to the utilities we rely on to conduct our daily routines, unless of course the flip of a switch doesn't produce the light, heat, cooling etc. that we'd expected. AB 547 recognizes the vital role our energy infrastructure plays in keeping our daily lives and businesses running smoothly, and provides adequate property protection for our energy providers.

While damage to a public utility property is already a crime in Wisconsin, this bill will enhance protections to these properties by increasing the penalty in cases where the damage is intended to interrupt or impair services. Disrupting energy provider services can impact large portions of our population and goes well beyond the inconvenience of lost services. Service impairment creates real economic and public safety costs. AB 547 ensures that in the case of criminal damage to utility property, the penalty fits the crime.

Beyond physical damage to utility property, advances in technology have opened the door to potential cybersecurity concerns involving our energy infrastructure. What may appear only to be a physical break-in or copper theft at a utility location, could in fact be cover for a more malicious cybercrime. Trespassing onto these properties creates the opportunity to gain access to a facility's cyber assets, allowing a trespasser to install unauthorized hardware or software. The results of this cybercrime can range from network reconnaissance to the possible compromise of sensitive information. What appears to be a simple physical breach can no longer be treated as a traditional property crime in the case of utility infrastructure given the cybersecurity implications. AB 547 recognizes the importance of protecting energy infrastructure from threats to cybersecurity by creating the crime of criminal trespass to a utility property. AB 547 ensures that in the case of criminal trespass to utility property, our law reflects technological advances.

Protecting our energy infrastructure is vital in securing the utility services, economic well-being, public safety, and cybersecurity of our residents. I urge you to support AB 547.

Thank you for allowing me to testify, and I welcome your questions and input.