



**Joint Legislative Budget Committee**  
**August 3, 2020**  
**Testimony in support of connectivity funding**  
**By Megan Bottenberg, Manager of Government Affairs**

Chairwoman, Vice Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Cox Communications is a member of the Kansas Cable Telecommunications Association (KCTA), and we are the largest provider of broadband in the state. Cox provides broadband in 92 Kansas communities—from Gas to Wichita, Garden City to Pittsburg and Topeka. We offer residential internet speeds from 25/3 up to 1 Gig in every town we serve, including Gas.

Since the start of the pandemic, Cox has worked with school districts, businesses, and cities to respond to the needs of critical connectivity in their communities. In March, Cox offered at no charge for the first 60 days our low-cost internet option (Connect2Compete) for those families who receive government assistance and who did not have access to internet in their homes. Although the free and valuable services expired in July when school was over, Connect2Compete continues to be available at \$9.95 per month to those who need it, in addition to other offers for students and families. Additionally, we are working with school districts, local governments and others to provide adoption solutions to meet connectivity needs.

However, we recognize that is not enough. Many cities have called Cox Communications since March asking for internet services outside the areas we serve—perhaps a mile outside of town or more. These areas are comprised of students, families, and adults who continue to work from home and needing reliable internet speeds of at least 25/3.

Cox Communications is eager to work with these cities to help solve their connectivity problems and help their communities. But some sort of financial help is needed. We have identified six locations across the state that we could build to by the end of the year—which is a mere five months away. These locations would provide broadband to over 1,700 new families that are currently unserved at an estimated cost of \$2.4 million. While these communities have been on our list of possible expansion for some time, it didn't make economic sense for Cox to build to them without a public-private partnership or a grant-assistance program.

A program, such as the one currently being proposed with CARES Act funds, provides us that opportunity. Cox Communications and the KCTA are in full support of the proposed broadband expansion and adoption program. However, needs across the state are great, and money is limited.

As such, grant program dollars must be prioritized to go to unserved areas, not in areas that are deemed competitive. Using public funds in areas where service already exists is not only anti-competitive but a wasteful use of scarce public resources. To guard against duplication of efforts, we urge the implementation of a "challenge process." This process, like the one recently implemented in the State of Idaho, would allow other providers a one to two week period to review grant applications and identify areas where similar service is currently available in that community/area.

Cox Communications and the entire cable industry stand ready to do our part to expand broadband to unserved Kansas communities and connect more homes, more Kansans, at a time of critical need. Thank you for your time and consideration.