

**To: Senate Utilities Committee, Senator Ty Masterson, Chairman**

**From: Ben Pinkston, Kansas Farm Bureau**

**Date: March 11, 2020**

**Re: Testimony in support of HB 2618 – creating the Broadband Deployment Grant Program**

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Chairman Masterson and members of the Committee, on behalf of Kansas Farm Bureau I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2618, which would create the Broadband Deployment Grant Program. KFB is the state's largest general farm organization representing more than 30,000 farm and ranch families through our 105 county Farm Bureau associations, many of which do not have access to adequate broadband to conduct what many consider normal day-to-day activities necessary to run a successful business.

KFB policy supports the deployment of broadband connectivity – both fixed and wireless. In fact, broadband is one of the top strategic action items this year for the American Farm Bureau Federation at the federal level. We at Kansas Farm Bureau like to think our strong push over the past few years in the broadband conversation led our national affiliate and numerous other state Farm Bureaus to realize the importance of this issue.

The Kansas Farm Bureau policy book states:

“We support every home, business and agricultural operation in Kansas having access to a high-speed communication infrastructure at a reasonable cost. We support a vibrant high-speed broadband network that delivers telemedicine applications, distance learning applications for K-12, higher education and continuing education, and gives libraries the ability to provide interactive content for rural citizens.”

The American Farm Bureau policy includes the follow:

- We support requiring companies that win broadband spectrum bids to quickly build out infrastructure or face significant fines for failing to do so. Any fines should be earmarked for broadband infrastructure in underserved rural areas.
- Standardizing the minimum acceptable speed for all federally-funded broadband projects to a speed not less than 25 Mbps/3Mbps;
- Increasing high speed internet access in rural areas through any source, including wireless, by using a combination of tax incentives, grants and/or regulations. Networks should meet and exceed the FCC's definition for broadband;
- Increased cooperation among Internet providers to improve access to broadband in rural areas through coordination/sharing of either current assets or the installation of necessary infrastructure;
- Identification of underserved areas in regards to broadband availability and the prioritization of those areas in terms of resource allocation;

These state and national policy positions lead KFB to stand in support of the Broadband Deployment Grant Program created by this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and we ask the Committee to favorably pass out this bill.