

**Kansas Senate
Utilities Committee
March 11, 2020
Room 548-S, Statehouse**

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today before the Senate Utilities Committee regarding broadband development and establishing a broadband grant program in Kansas.

First, I would like to commend you and your colleagues for the leadership and hard work on the Broadband Expansion Task Force and this committee. As you know, we worked closely with the Task Force throughout its deliberations. The Task Force recommendations that are incorporated in the bill are a positive step forward to improving access to broadband infrastructure in Kansas. By formally establishing the office of broadband development and an infrastructure grant program framework, Kansas will be able to ensure we are a fully connected state. Our businesses and rural communities will be able to fully participate in and benefit from the growing digital economy.

There are a few areas in the bill I would to highlight for your consideration:

- The bill provides for the grant program to be *competitive*. Prospective applicants will be required to make a compelling case as to why a particular project should be funded and applications will be scored on multiple dimensions, such as the number of premises that will be newly connected, the quality and capability of the service offering, the financial and technical capabilities to complete the project, and support of the local community impacted.
- The bill includes a *challenge process* provision. If a service provider believes an application proposes to build in an area already served by broadband, they may contest the application so that a determination can be made as to the facts. Further, the process accommodates the possibility that an existing service provider which has already committed private capital to build out or improve an area would not then be competing with a grant funded project.
- There is a requirement for us to provide annual progress reports to the legislature as well as publishing the applications and funding awards information online for full transparency.

- This bill provides flexibility for the office of broadband development to promote the adoption of new technologies and work across state government to achieve efficiencies.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you once again for the opportunity to speak with you today on this important proposed legislation. I believe it provides Commerce with the needed direction and framework for us to ensure we are making a positive impact on broadband connectivity - and hence economic development - for our state.

I'm happy to address any questions you may have.

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