

To: Senate Committee on Utilities, Senator Olson, Chairman

From: Tiya Tonn-Oppold, Kansas Farm Bureau Member, Butler County

Date: February 4, 2016

Re: Testimony SB 346 – Telecommunications and universal service support

---

Chairman Olson and members of the Committee, my name is Tiya Tonn-Oppold, and I am a member of the Butler County Farm Bureau. I am appearing today on behalf of Kansas Farm Bureau in support of efforts to make rural broadband more available and reliable.

My four children and I ranch in the beautiful Flint Hills near Cassoday. We sell beef directly to consumers via our website, email newsletters, Facebook & Twitter; that is, when we have access to internet service.

My oldest son, 24, has graduated and returned to the ranch to run it with me. A cell phone with spotty coverage and sketchy internet service are his connections to the rest of the world as he works alone miles away from anyone but cattle. Accurate weather and market information are crucial to his role.

My oldest daughter, 22, is winding up her teaching degree at Southwestern College. In order to pick up classes for her minor concentration, she needed online classes last summer. She had to drive to work an hour before her waitressing shift to utilize the wifi at Applebee's in order to connect to her classes.

My youngest daughter, 20, a junior at Central Christian College, has undergone several surgeries and needed to continue her coursework while at the ranch recovering. Unreliable internet is frustrating to this honor roll student.

My youngest son, a senior at Flinthills High School, faces the same issues with his required internet-based research for high school homework requirements and his online college classes.

Farm and ranch families all across Kansas can share similar stories. That's why Kansas Farm Bureau's member-driven policy supports "every home and business in Kansas having access to a high-speed communication infrastructure at a reasonable cost."

Spotty internet service greatly impedes our day-to-day operations. When placing online orders, the computer screen will freeze while waiting for the signal to return. When it's time to renew my licenses, I must drive to town to assure that the internet connection will not be lost while taking my tests. Remote access banking will lock me out of my accounts due to multiple login attempts as the webpages reload, which also in turn causes double & triple the data usage, costing our family more money. Missed or delayed customer orders impact our bottom line as we are forced to compensate our loyal customers with discounts for order delays. I have had to outsource the website maintenance, at additional cost, so available beef supplies may be updated in a timely fashion. I conduct most email correspondence on my phone while in coverage areas.

Some dream of vacations in Paris, some of retiring in warmth; I dream of internet in my home office at the ranch so that by the time I have grandchildren, I'll have access to affordable quality internet service to Skype and Facetime them, and brag on Facebook about them without wondering if the stars all aligned and internet connection is available.

As you go about making your decisions, please remember the physical and financial safety of my family depends upon access to economic and reliable internet service and the choices you make here.

Thank you for your time and consideration.