



March 12, 2013

Dear Chairman Apple and Members of the Senate Utilities Committee,

Kansas Advocates for Better Care is a not for profit organization with members across Kansas. Our mission is to advocate on behalf of frail elders and disabled adults living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Kansas.

On behalf of our members and the elders in long-term care facilities we respectfully **oppose HB 2201**, an Act Concerning Telecommunications for the following reasons:

- ★ Eliminate Carrier of Last Resort Responsibilities - especially for rural areas
- ★ Eliminate Requirement to have Single Line Residential Local Exchange Service
- ★ Eliminate Lifeline Service Cap
- ★ Eliminate the Corporation Commission's authority over Minimum Standards for Quality of Service and Authority to Address Consumer Concerns/Complaints

Elders, more often than the rest of us in Kansas, rely on land lines as their sole or primary phone service. This is especially true for the 18,000 elders who live in Kansas nursing homes. Each Kansas county has at least one nursing home and most of the residents who can afford a phone, have a land line in their room. It is a lifeline, allowing them to stay connected to family and friends. Staying connected to others and the relationships that have sustained them for a lifetime, is critical for their mental, emotional and physical well-being. The telephone is often that lifeline. A familiar, reliable, affordable link to children and grandchildren living out of state, to neighbors and extension club members, to fellow church members.

Should an elder be abused or neglected in a nursing facility, using their phone may be a lifeline of a different sort. All of us default to that with which we are familiar, this is never more true than when facilitating communications for elders, especially those with dementia or Alzheimers. The landline phone they have used in their lifetime, is the phone they likely remember how to use now. The assumption that elders will transition to cell phones or to using Voice over Internet phones is not well founded. Try as I might, I could not get my mother to use the cell phones I bought for her, and she took great delight in pointing out to me their unreliability when we were out of service range, which happens frequently in the hills and on the plains in the west.

In rural areas of the state such as Coldwater or St. Francis there is little if any real competition for service which will make these areas more vulnerable to higher rates and minimum quality of service standards. Eliminating In protections from increases currently in place and the assurance of service will both be gone for elders living in the many non-urban counties of Kansas.

We would request that you not remove the utility's responsibility as carrier of last resort. To do so would in essence deprive many elders of phone service and vital social and emergency connection.

Adults living in long-term care settings have lost many things, they should not lose their ability to keep up with friends and loved ones by talking on their phones.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mitzi E. Metz".