



To: Senate Committee on Utilities

From: Chad Austin
Senior Vice President, Government Relations

Date: March 20, 2018

Re: House Bill 2701

On behalf of the members of the Kansas Hospital Association, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments in support of House Bill 2701. The proposed legislation would establish the statewide broadband expansion task force.

Hospitals use broadband for everything from managing daily operations to facilitating telehealth services. The need for reliable, secure and affordable access to broadband is growing at a rapid pace. Just a few years ago, hospitals were finding a 10 megabit circuit to be sufficient. Today, most have redundant circuits ranging from 100 megabits to 1 gigabyte.

The rural nature of our state coupled with the anticipated health care workforce shortages in future years makes telemedicine programs imperative. Telemedicine allows patients in rural communities to access physicians and other services without time consuming and costly travel. Most telemedicine consultations take place via video conference which requires a robust and reliable broadband connection to ensure a quality experience.

As it relates to House Bill 2701, we believe the creation of a broadband expansion task force would assist our state in identifying further broadband needs for the state of Kansas. We are supportive of this effort. There are many great efforts happening in other states which should be examined and potentially implemented in Kansas. We do think it is important to have both industry and anchor institutions (schools, libraries, hospitals) at the table during these discussions. We are appreciative that KHA has been identified to serve on the broadband expansion task force.

KHA believes that every Kansan deserves access to quality health care. Broadband connectivity ensures that rural communities have the same access to health and services as urban areas. Continued attention to access in rural areas will ensure that the rural/urban divide does not continue to grow. We hope this task force will focus efforts in this area.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Feel free to let us know if you have any questions or need additional information.