



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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**Proponent Written Testimony
HB 2618 – Establishing the state broadband deployment grant program.**

**Senate Committee on Utilities
March 11, 2020**

**Submitted by Doug Shepherd, Vice President of Management Consulting Services
Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc.**

Chairman Masterson and members of the Senate Committee on Utilities, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (KEC) and our members to comment in support of HB 2618.

KEC is the Kansas statewide service organization for 27 electric distribution cooperatives and three generation and transmission cooperatives. Formed on August 18, 1941, and headquartered in Topeka, KEC represents the interests of and provides needed services and programs to the electric co-ops that serve Kansans. Our major programming areas include advocacy, education, communications and safety/loss control.

As you know, the legislature approved creation of the Statewide Broadband Expansion Planning Task Force two years ago. Electric cooperatives held a seat on the task force and I had the pleasure of serving as the electric co-op representative. We very much appreciated the opportunity to serve in this important conversation.

Our electric cooperatives understand the need to ensure reliable, high-speed broadband service is available across the state. Our member cooperatives are uniquely situated to help facilitate that deployment. For some, that will mean serving as a direct provider, while others may partner with the local communications providers. Co-ops may also be a financial partner by accessing grant dollars available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture or the Federal Communications Commission.

The decisions regarding the role an electric cooperative may play in fostering broadband deployment in their community will depend on the needs of the members and whether those needs are adequately met by current providers. We do anticipate that there will be opportunities for co-ops to assist in deployment in many areas of the state in the coming years.

We know that deployment is expensive so funding will be key to extending quality broadband service across the state. We appreciate HB 2618 and the work that went into crafting it. It is a positive step toward fostering broadband expansion in rural communities throughout Kansas.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our support for HB 2618 and respectfully request this committee act favorably on the bill.

Thank you.