



TESTIMONY OF THE KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
TO THE HOUSE ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE
ON HB 2451

February 7, 2018

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer neutral written testimony on HB 2451. While the bill provides a fee payable to local government, it also creates access to local government rights-of-ways and easements, and we are unsure whether local government retains any rights to regulate these public areas under HB 2451.

Our member counties passed the following policy priority for the 2018 legislative session: “KAC supports policies that enable broadband development (high-speed internet) and access to improve economic development, telemedicine care, and government efficiency.” This statement reflects an increasing urgency to look at infrastructure as something more than roads, water, and energy. Access to information is essential for communities. And it is essential in the same way that citizens have historically viewed the necessity of roads connecting one town to another.

The National Association of Counties made the following points with regard to broadband in its recent forum on the issue:

1. Rural broadband drives economic development.

Rural communities that had relatively high access to broadband saw faster wage and job growth in the following years, as compared to other rural areas. Broadband is essential for rural regions to appeal to both potential businesses and residents.

2. Take a community inventory.

Rural regions vary greatly across the U.S. By taking an inventory of community resources and market potential, counties can encourage telecommunications companies to expand broadband access into their regions. This inventory will also allow counties to assess the full impact of broadband deployment.

3. Rural broadband is also an urban issue.

Rural and urban regions are dependent on each other. Rural broadband allows individuals and businesses to cross the urban-rural border, which creates mutual benefits and opens opportunities.

Broadband expansion in Kansas is a priority issues for Kansas counties; however, we do not believe HB 2451 represents the best solution for expansion in our state.

We appreciate the committee's continuing efforts to study broadband expansion and look for a workable means to expand broadband in the state.

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