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**HOUSE ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**Testimony in Support of HB 2701 – Establishing the Statewide Broadband Expansion Task Force**  
**Feb. 14, 2018**

**Presented by:**  
**Alex Orel, Manager of Government Relations (913-602-0074)**

Chairman Seiwert and members of the House Committee on Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications, thank you for the opportunity to appear today on HB 2701, a bill establishing the statewide broadband expansion task force. I am Alex Orel, Manager of Government Relations for Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (KEC). KEC is a voluntary membership association that serves 28 not-for-profit distribution electric cooperatives and three generation and transmission electric cooperatives in Kansas.

Establishing a statewide broadband taskforce is a very important step for the people of Kansas who want access to high speed internet. Any efforts to build broadband for our citizens will definitely help lead the way to improving their quality of life. Rural Kansans in particular are asking for access to high speed internet so they can bring in economic development opportunities, meet the needs of local business and provide service for schools to expand educational opportunities.

Electric cooperatives have made broadband a national priority and many of our counterparts have seen success in their efforts. Many of our electric cooperative members are engaged in this topic because of the interest of their member-owners. In January, we held a panel during our annual meeting with representatives from the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative, Nex-Tech (a Kansas-based broadband and technology company) and one of our electric cooperative members to discuss broadband partnerships and resources. Our membership also operates close to 90,000 miles of electric line so any improvements in the current system would likely include electric cooperatives in the discussions to successfully expand broadband. It is for those reasons that we support HB 2701 and would appreciate an amendment to add a member of the task force appointed by the Kansas Electric Cooperatives.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present testimony on HB 2701 and I would be willing to stand for questions at the appropriate time.