



*Written Testimony Submitted to the*

**House Energy & Utilities Committee**

February 13, 2020

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### **Written Testimony in Support of HB 2618**

Kansas Municipal Utilities (KMU) is the statewide association of community owned and operated electric, natural gas, water, wastewater, stormwater and telecommunications utilities across Kansas. As a non-profit association established by its member utilities in 1928, KMU is dedicated to serving the training needs and legislative & regulatory interests of our 185 consumer-owned utilities and the citizens, businesses and industries that they serve. Our membership ranges in size from some of the largest utilities in the state such as those operated by Kansas City Board of Public Utilities and the City of Wichita, down to some of the smallest utility systems in the state, some serving fewer than 100 customers.

We are pleased to provide written comments in support of HB 2618 which creates a statewide broadband deployment grant program administered by the broadband development office within the Kansas Department of Commerce. I was pleased to have the opportunity to serve on the Broadband Taskforce as well as one of the taskforce subcommittees. This is the natural first step to helping deploy a basic broadband network in some areas and a more robust broadband network in other areas.

As we have discussed before, broadband deployment is a critical issue impacting all our member communities whether they are large or small, rural or urban. Our member utilities provide services that are fundamental to Kansans living the life they want to live – whether it is affordable power, safe and reliable natural gas or clean drinking water. As was affirmed in the Broadband Taskforce discussions, broadband service is quickly becoming a basic utility service and Kansans across the state should have access to reliable, high-speed internet. Whether you are a large industrial customer in Wichita needing higher internet speeds to download large data files, a doctor serving Lakin and the surrounding areas, or an artisan outside of Tonganoxie who ships her goods globally, broadband is the lynchpin of our new economy and necessary to our communities.

Because of the fiber backbone that exists to support our existing utilities, our member utilities already are an integral part of the broadband deployment discussion. We connect with other local government services and in some instances businesses or non-profits have asked to connect to our services so that they have access to a more robust network. We are uniquely placed to help further broadband deployment across Kansas and look forward to supporting the Office of Broadband Development in its efforts.

Thank you for your consideration.