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Testimony on SB 219
PROPONENT
House Judiciary Committee

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Chairman Patton and Members of the Committee:

I write today regarding SB 219, a bill that would amend the Scrap Metal Theft Reduction Act.

Since the passage of SB 11 in 2015, implementation of the law has been delayed and the database has not been funded. SB 291 would amend the Scrap Metal Theft Reduction Act to ensure the burden on scrap metal dealers is lessened and enforce the now four-year old Act.

Scrap metal theft is an issue facing both our urban and rural communities. As customers throughout our communities rely on their wireless and traditional phone service to have consistent connection, the impact of copper wire theft can cause great harm.

Reliable and consistent access to telecommunications service is the foundation of our company. Whether it is to contact a health care provider or to stay in touch with friends and family, our customers expect our service to be there when they need it. For businesses of all sizes across the state, internet and phone access is essential for staying connected to clients, customers and employees. In the event of an emergency, both our customers and emergency responders need to be able to rely on the network to connect those calls. When our network is damaged because of scrap metal theft, our customers' access to this critical service is disrupted, and the consequences for these customers can be severe to potentially life-threatening.

Moreover, when there is a service interruption due to theft, the restoration of service is a top priority, which means that all other work, such as construction, replacement or repair must be delayed while the necessary repairs take place. When adding up the impact copper theft has on emergency responders, communities, businesses, and service providers, the cost is staggering. From 2017 through 2019, loss figures incidents relating to copper theft for AT&T on an Enterprise basis, have totaled more than \$11 million dollars, and in Kansas, the loss figures due to copper theft totals more than \$700,000.

With the increase of scrap metal theft across Kansas, ensuring statewide implementation of a database and enforcement is critical to the reduction of theft. The Legislature has seen the harmful influence of scrap metal theft for far too many years, and now must be the time to act in the best interest of Kansans with the passage of SB 291.

Respectfully submitted,


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