



Written Testimony as Proponent in
Senate Commerce Committee
on
HB 2701 – Establishing the statewide broadband expansion task force
by
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Madam Chairwoman, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony in favor of [HB 2701](#), establishing the statewide broadband expansion task force.

KASB supports public schools developing collaborative efforts with business, social services, and governmental agencies to promote learning; and to provide services and resources to the community. We applaud the intent of this bill and the inclusion of Education Commissioner Dr. Randy Watson on the task force.

In November 2016, Governor Brownback and Education Commissioner Watson announced the launch of the **Kansas Connect & Learn Initiative**, a partnership between KSDE and the non-profit organization EducationSuperHighway to ensure every student and teacher in Kansas has the bandwidth they need for 21st century learning.

The [EducationSuperHighway State of the States 2017 annual report](#) shows that while 99 percent of Kansas school districts meet the minimum connectivity goal established by the partnership, 6,200 students in four school districts (Liberal USD 480, Kismet-Plains USD 483, Weskan USD 242 and West Franklin USD 287) still need to be connected to that goal. In addition, 62 schools – mostly in rural and small-town communities, still need fiber infrastructure.

Furthermore, lack of consistent access to high-speed internet service is frequently cited as a barrier to student learning in Kansas. Rural schools and parents report that students without reliable home internet access often drive into town to use restaurant or public library wi-fi to complete schoolwork that must be turned in online. Rural counties with large population declines expect to continue to lose Main Street businesses and battle out-migration if internet service is not improved.

We believe the task force established by HB 2701 will raise awareness of the infrastructure and funding challenges that continue to hamper full internet connectivity in Kansas and stand ready to assist in this effort.