



**Testimony of Kansas Independent Fiber Association  
In Support of HB 2701  
Before the Senate Utilities Committee  
March 20, 2018**

There is increasing demand from our fellow Kansans for the government and our industry to resolve the problem of underserved and unserved broadband in homes, farms, and businesses across our state. Fast broadband is no longer a luxury or a service of convenience but a core utility that we depend on daily just like we do for electricity and water.

Few issues bring all Kansans together, but access to broadband is one of them. For Kansans to be a connected part of the 21st-century economy, our homes, schools, and business need access to broadband, yet we have fallen on issues of broadband deployment and broadband speeds.

The Kansas Independent Fiber Association is focused on broadband deployment in underserved areas of Kansas. Its members are not just talking about these issues, but actually doing it, forging ahead with fiber-fast solutions, at an affordable price.

The Association's two founding members, IdeaTek and RG Fiber, were both started by entrepreneurs frustrated by the pace of broadband deployment. Today, we are bringing gigabit-capable fiber-based broadband to underserved communities in Kansas. Together we represent over 2,500 miles of fiber optic construction and operations experience across our state and are poised to do much more.

The Association supports HB 2701 and its mission of developing a plan to resolve the gap in broadband deployment to underserved areas of our state. We are grateful the Senate Commerce Committee saw the need for the voice of competitive and independent fiber providers and unanimously supported including a representative from our association on the task force.

While we will certainly share our story with the task force, we'd like to highlight a couple of issues that impact our ability to further deploy our needed services:

1. **Access to capital.** Consider programs designed to support private infrastructure investment with low-cost or revolving loans that a variety of broadband providers can access.
2. **Reduction in the red tape.** Streamlining matters of permitting and right of way access will help to reduce deployment costs. It is certainly important that this bill brings local, county, and state government together to work with providers on streamlining broadband installation.
3. **Incentives.** Making deployment business cases less expensive through mechanisms such as tax credits and sales tax exemptions also warrant consideration.



In summary, we can no longer continue to let areas of our state fall farther and farther behind on issues of broadband. We are passionate about the deployment of real and sustainable broadband to everyone in Kansas, and believe we will be an asset to the task force.

This bill is an extremely important step in starting an open and constructive conversation about the issues facing broadband, and we stand ready help make a difference. We sincerely appreciate the committee's attention to this issue.

The Kansas Independent Fiber Association supports HB 2701.

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