



KANSAS
RURAL INDEPENDENT
Telephone Companies

Investment that works for all Kansans

Senate Utilities Committee
SB 389 Comments

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee: I am Catherine Moyer, the General Manager of Pioneer Communications, which is headquartered in Ulysses, Kansas. My comments are made on behalf of the Kansas rural telecommunications companies.

I currently serve on the State Affairs Committee of the rural telecommunications providers. I also serve on the Kan-ed Advisory Committee, a committee of telecommunications providers and Kan-ed members and users, established by Kan-ed, under the Board of Regents. I have been closely involved with the Kan-ed program and its many pieces of legislation over the past several years.

My comments today address Senate Bill 389, a bill concerning Kan-ed. I would like to briefly address the history of Kan-ed and the rural telecommunications providers and pledge our help and support in assisting the Committee in crafting changes to Senate Bill 389.

The rural telecommunications providers have been philosophically in favor of the concept of providing high-speed Internet access and Kan-ed access to schools, libraries, and hospitals in Kansas from the inception of the Kan-ed program supporting our communities' needs for distance learning and telemedicine. The rural providers provided proponent testimony in both the Senate and the House for the original Kan-ed establishment bills. We believed then, as we do now, a properly administered Kan-ed program would be beneficial to schools, hospitals and libraries—entities that are cornerstones in the small communities we serve. Prior to the establishment of Kan-ed, many schools, hospitals and libraries were connected to each other in small, regional networks. Those entities were able to share resources, such as teachers in the case of schools, and were able to connect with each other to share information. Kan-ed was viewed as a way to bring these regional networks together into a state-wide network for the purposes of distance learning. The thought was a state-wide network would bring immense value to the connected members, and allow schools, hospitals and libraries across the state to share resources.

The Kan-ed network has been through several versions of this state-wide network, from a piecemeal network put together with sections of network leased by the State

Blue Valley Telephone Company
Home

Bluestem Telephone Company
Dodge City

Columbus Telephone Company

Craw-Kan Telephone Coop., Inc.
Girard

Cunningham Telephone Company, Inc.
Glen Elder

Elkhart Telephone

Golden Belt Telephone Assn., Inc.
Rush Center

Gorham Telephone Company

H&B Communications, Inc.
Holyrood

Haviland Telephone Company, Inc.

Home Telephone Company, Inc.
Galva

JBN Telephone Company, Inc.
Wetmore

KanOkla Telephone Assn., Inc.
Caldwell

LaHarpe Telephone Company, Inc.

Madison Telephone Company, Inc.

MoKan Dial, Inc.
Louisburg

Mutual Telephone Company
Little River

Peoples Mutual Telephone Company
LaCygne

Pioneer Telephone Assn., Inc.
Ulysses

Rainbow Telephone Coop. Assn., Inc.
Everest

Rural Telephone Service Company, Inc.
Lenora

S & A Telephone Company, Inc.
Allen

S & T Telephone Coop. Assn.
Brewster

South Central Telephone Assn., Inc.
Medicine Lodge

Southern Kansas Telephone Co., Inc.
Clearwater

Sunflower Telephone Company, Inc.
Dodge City

Total Telephone Company, Inc.
Ochelata, OK

Tri-County Telephone Assn., Inc.
Council Grove

Twin Valley Telephone, Inc.
Miltonvale

United Telephone Association, Inc.
Dodge City

Wamego Telephone Company, Inc.

The Wheat State Telephone Co., Inc.
Udall

Wilson Telephone Company, Inc.

of Kansas from many companies, to a network from one carrier following a bid process (though that company may have had to purchase pieces of network from other carriers to provide the entire network). The goal had always been to connect these many entities across the entire State of Kansas together to support both educational and medical needs. In order to connect, a robust broadband connection to each entity was needed. The rural telecommunications providers were ready to provide that robust broadband connection, and in most cases, had provided that robust broadband connection to the entities prior to the establishment of Kan-ed.

Now that we have several years of Kan-ed history to examine, it has become evident one of the most desirable pieces of the Kan-ed “network” was the robust connection to the users—the schools, hospitals and libraries.

Senate Bill 398 appears to move away from the original intent of Kan-ed providing a network for distance learning, and to a program that provides only a subsidy to eligible members for a broadband connection and a needs assessment to help a member determine the structure of that broadband connection. As referenced earlier in this testimony, the broadband connection is the most desirable piece of the current Kan-ed network to many connected members.

We urge you to recognize the continuing – and increasing – need for broadband delivery of vital services in rural Kansas. Whatever form your Kan-Ed considerations may take, we stand ready to offer our experience and perspective toward assuring continuing connectivity in the communities we serve.