

**Kansas Department of Commerce
Testimony on HB 2618
Patty Clark, Deputy Secretary
Prepared for House Energy, Utilities and Telecommunications Committee
February 13, 2020, 9:00 a.m.**

Good Morning, Chairman Seiwert, and members of the Committee. I am Patty Clark and I currently serve as Deputy Secretary for the Kansas Department of Commerce. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 2618.

To begin, we appreciate the work of the Broadband Task Force and your work as its Co-Chair. Throughout this process, Commerce has been working closely with you and the Task Force, and we appreciate the collaborative spirit you all have brought to this complicated subject. As many before me have said, broadband is to this century what electrification was to the previous century. It is an investment that moves our economy forward and improves the quality of life for all Kansans.

Because of your work and the work of the Task Force, we have learned about best practices in other states regarding the design and delivery of broadband grant programs, as well as the economic impact of enhanced broadband investment. HB 2618 reflects many of those best practices.

The challenge process, as outlined in the draft bill, is a critical component of a grant program because it helps ensure that grant dollars are used effectively and efficiently. The requirement that Commerce develop, publish, and utilize a well-reasoned scoring matrix for the competitive grant process is judicious. These measures would add to the transparency of both grant administration and performance accountability of the grantees.

Further, the draft bill provides sensible guidance for a grant program. The guidance clearly emphasizes that the grant award should be outcome-based and provide details regarding premises served, as well as timeliness of construction and the requisite actions Commerce should take if performance targets are not met.

Our apologies that Stanley Adams is not available today, but he is attending a meeting of his colleagues from other states across the US this week. In fact, he shared via email yesterday that HB 2618 is consistent with 'promising practices' that Pew Research has identified. He also shared that with the addition of Mississippi, all 50 states now have some type of dedicated focus on broadband and most have or are moving toward some type of competitive grant program. I know he will make himself available to you and your Committee members when he returns and as you consider this legislation.