



6946 Post Rd. North Kingstown, RI 02852

2/14/21

To: Whom it may concern

From: David Marble

Re: Support for H5148

On behalf of OSHEAN, Inc and its membership of over 160 RI Community Anchor Institutions, I write in support of H5148 and the establishment of the Broadband Development Program.

The establishment of a state coordinator for broadband has been a significant weak spot in the coordination of the state's efforts to build the next generation digital infrastructure. Broadband is the foundation of the digital transformation of our economic, research and education communities and currently, RI has no central council coordinating efforts across the state.

Rhode Island is one of only two states without a broadband office and as such suffers in the developments necessary to keep pace with the changing times. The pandemic has taught everyone the importance of the networks necessary for supporting a remote learning environment and remote workforce. The complexity of issues facing the state in the coming years regarding the impact of IT technology cannot be underestimated and we believe a coordinating body focused on the myriad of issues with broadband access is the perfect place to start the conversation. No single perspective can inform to the level necessary. We must have multiple voices, hence the requirement for the establishment of the council.

The state benefitted greatly when Broadband RI was funded and working under the Federal BTOP program and we lost an important piece of work when we chose not to continue the office when BTOP ended. Currently there is no central body for cities and towns to work with, no statewide broadband mapping program and no focus on opportunities for grant funding in this and associated areas. We, at OSHEAN, implore the legislature to consider approval of H5148 to position our state properly for our digital future.

Respectfully,

David Marble

CEO, OSHEAN

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