



## TOWN OF WARREN, RHODE ISLAND

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Office of Town Manager

February 22, 2021

Representative Deborah Ruggiero, Chairwoman  
House Committee on Innovation, Internet and Technology  
State of Rhode Island General Assembly  
One Capitol Hill  
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

### **RE: Letter in Support of House Bill No. 5148**

Dear Chairwoman Ruggiero and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Please accept this letter of support for the subject bill and for the establishment of the Rhode Island Broadband Development Program. Accessible and affordable broadband access has been an issue of concern for the Town of Warren for several years. Like so many other aspects of life, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought this issue into focus through increased dependence on internet service for municipal operations, education, healthcare, commerce and public safety. Much attention has been given to the internet issues on Aquidneck Island as they have demonstrated the extraordinary costs and poor performance of their service. I am writing to let you know that these issues are statewide and include the Town of Warren.

As classrooms, doctor's appointments and public meetings moved into our living rooms, shortcomings in our existing internet services have been on display for all to see. Lagging speeds and high costs have had a negative impact on everything from virtual court hearings to credit card processing. The cost to connect to fiber, when available, was unaffordable before we experienced the worst economic downturn in a lifetime. However, the news is not all bad and there is a silver lining.

The State of Rhode Island has more fiber installed than any other state in the Union. We have led the way in creating a backbone of high-quality fiber-optic strands installed and ready to go to work for our state. Through the passage of the subject bill, this backbone will receive the recognition it deserves as critical infrastructure. The establishment of a Broadband Coordinator and a Broadband Council will assist the state in accessing federal funds, which can be used to build out the "middle mile" and "last mile" connections that are needed to make Rhode Island a true innovator and a competitor in the new economy. Instead of spending taxpayer dollars on propping up obsolete technology, we can instead invest in technology that will bring us into the future with greater speed, greater reliability and a lower overall cost. Through coordination, an intelligent strategy and the passage of House Bill No. 5148, Rhode Island has the chance to bounce forward for a more resilient tomorrow.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kate Michaud, AICP  
Town Manager

"The Town of Warren is an equal opportunity provider and employer."