



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

DIVISION OF PUBLIC UTILITIES & CARRIERS

**Administration
89 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, Rhode Island 02888
(401) 941-4500
(401) 941-9207 - Fax**

February 23, 2021

**The Honorable Deborah Ruggiero
Chair – House Committee on
Innovation, Internet and Technology
State House
Providence, R.I. 02903**

Re: H 5148 Rhode Island Broadband Development Program

Dear Chairperson Ruggiero,

The Division supports the creation of a Broadband Coordinator and Broadband Council as envisioned in H 5148 to advance access to internet service, with its corresponding benefits for commerce and the quality of life in Rhode Island.

Internet service is not under the regulatory purview of our agency, but rather the Federal Communications Commission. We nevertheless in recent years have joined other state agencies in working with consumers, and public officials in doing our best to answer questions about general service availability, digital equity and related issues. The establishment of a single point of contact would be tremendously helpful in establishing a nexus of broadband data, and a means to explore the acquisition of federal and private grant funds to advance digital access, equity and adoption.

This coordination would present a valuable resource related to digital infrastructure for existing residential and business consumers, as well as those contemplating a relocation to Rhode Island. The state would also benefit by having ready access to data concerning commercial, institutional and governmental resources, including fiber optic capacity. The Broadband Council would also be able to generate data on resource development and changing needs.

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The technical evolution of broadband service, and what consumers expect from it, is moving at a significant pace. Having a structure for broadband coordination to provide situational awareness and advocacy for this vital infrastructure can help Rhode Island promote its competitive advantage in access to broadband, address service gaps, and provide a resource for individuals, businesses and institutions as well as state and local government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Linda George". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Linda" and last name "George" clearly distinguishable.

Linda George, Esq.

Administrator, RI Division of Public Utilities and Carriers

Cc. House Committee on Innovation, Internet and Technology