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THE FOUNDATION FOR BIOETHICS IN TECHNOLOGY

The Foundation for Bioethics in Technology
Rhode Island, USA 02818
<https://bioethics.tech>

Date: February 2, 2026

To: Members of the House Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly

Re: Written Testimony in Opposition to H7333
Broadband Oversight and Accountability Act of 2026

Dear Honorable Members of the Committee,

The Foundation for Bioethics in Technology respectfully submits this written-only testimony regarding H7333, the Broadband Oversight and Accountability Act of 2026.

The Foundation supports lawful oversight of broadband infrastructure. However, oversight must protect the public, not simply measure systems. As drafted, H7333 establishes accountability mechanisms focused on service performance and market objectives while omitting explicit protections for public health, informed consent, and human rights.

Modern broadband infrastructure is no longer passive. Fiber, fixed wireless, cellular, and satellite systems increasingly function as data extraction, behavioral monitoring, and electromagnetic exposure environments. Governance frameworks that fail to acknowledge this reality risk prioritizing deployment efficiency over the lived experience of residents.

H7333 expands oversight and monitoring authority without clearly articulating guardrails for consent, data minimization, secondary data use, or public transparency. The bill does not define accountability in relation to bodily autonomy, privacy, or health impact.

Oversight without rights becomes surveillance by default.

This outcome does not require malicious intent. It arises predictably when oversight frameworks focus on system performance while omitting explicit protections for the people living within those systems.

A careful reading of the bill makes clear that “monitoring” refers to service levels, access, and market performance not emissions, exposure, or public health. Broadband continues to include fixed wireless infrastructure, yet no duty of care regarding biological or environmental impact is

articulated. As drafted, accountability functions primarily for providers and deployment objectives, not for residents living in proximity to this infrastructure.

The bill does not expand the authority of the Division of Public Utilities and Carriers beyond existing statutory limits under Title 39, nor does it address the Small Cell Siting Act, which by design favors rapid deployment and industry interests over the population the infrastructure serves. As a result, H7333 creates the appearance of enhanced oversight while leaving the most consequential public health and siting concerns unchanged.

When deployment, measurement, enforcement, and data access exist within the same ecosystem, oversight risks becoming performative rather than protective. This is a structural governance issue driven by incentives, not an allegation of bad faith. To be clear, H7333 creates a conflict of interest in monitoring and enforcement.

True accountability requires clear separation between infrastructure deployment interests and the protection of public rights.

Broadband infrastructure shapes electromagnetic environments and data flows that directly affect privacy, autonomy, and bodily integrity. Whether health impacts are considered settled or contested, the ethical duty of care remains non-negotiable. The absence of any requirement for health impact assessment, emissions review, or safety-oriented accountability represents a significant gap in the bill's framework.

Recommended Rights-First Amendments

The Foundation urges the General Assembly to adopt the following safeguards:

Public Health and Rights Purpose Clause

Explicitly state that broadband oversight includes protection of public health, bodily autonomy, and informed consent, including authority to require health impact assessments for broadband and fixed wireless infrastructure.

Data Minimization and Transparency

Require disclosure of what data is collected, how long it is retained, who receives it, and whether it is shared or sold.

Opt-In Participation

Prohibit compulsory participation in monitoring or measurement programs beyond technical necessity.

Procurement Guardrails

Forbid state contracts that allow secondary data sale, cross-context tracking, or undisclosed third-party data sharing.

Independent Accountability

Ensure oversight structures are insulated from industry capture and include public reporting mechanisms.

Conclusion

Access to broadband should not require the surrender of fundamental rights, and oversight mechanisms should be designed to minimize, not expand, data extraction. Rhode Island has an opportunity to lead by ensuring broadband governance serves the people first, with explicit protections for health, dignity, and autonomy.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Rachael L. McIntosh
Founder & Executive Director
The Foundation for Bioethics in Technology

East Greenwich, Rhode Island 02818
<https://bioethics.tech>

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