



Public & Government Relations
9 J.P. Murphy Industrial Highway
West Warwick, Rhode Island 02893

January 26, 2022

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara, Chairman
House Committee on Education
House Lounge
Providence, RI 02903

Re: H – 6666, An Act Relating to Education – Health and Safety of Pupils

Dear Chairman McNamara,

I write today in support of Representative Ranglin-Vassell’s goal of providing every Rhode Island student with high-speed internet. We look forward to working with you and the sponsor on proposed language we feel can best accomplish this goal.

Cox has invested \$197 million in upgrading our Rhode Island infrastructure in the past three years. As a result, Rhode Island has much to celebrate when it comes to broadband. More than 99% of homes have access to gigabit-speed internet and the state is consistently ranked as having the highest speeds in the country.¹ Leveraging this infrastructure and focusing on *adoption* can allow Rhode Island to close the digital divide and ensure all Rhode Islanders, regardless of income level, can learn, work, and connect to important services.

To help accomplish this goal, our Connect2Compete program provides in-home broadband for \$9.95 per month and was established to help bridge the digital divide and ensure reliable in-home Internet was accessible to nearly everyone in Rhode Island, regardless of income level. The service is available to families with a K-12 student who:

- Are eligible for the National School Lunch Program, SNAP, TANF, Head Start, WIC and/or LIHEAP.
- Receive tenant-based vouchers, project-based vouchers, or Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance.
- Live in public housing.

Connect2Compete requires no annual contracts or deposits and includes free Wi-Fi modem and installation. Discounted equipment is available via our partnership with PCs for People.

An additional resource, the Affordable Connectivity Program (“ACP”) is a newly established federal program that replaced the Emergency Broadband Benefit program.

¹ <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/04/30/metro/study-rhode-island-has-fastest-internet-speeds-country/#:~:text=The%20site%2C%20which%20has%20a,the%20annual%20HighSpeedInternet.com%20rankings.>

Eligible households enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program receive up to \$30 off their monthly bill based on their current internet service. There are close to 6,000 Rhode Island families currently enrolled in ACP with Cox.

In order to provide students with access to high-speed internet, many states, including very recently, Connecticut, have worked with service providers to establish voucher programs for internet service and devices. We very much support this approach and would welcome participating to establish one in Rhode Island.

Once again, we applaud Representative Ranglin-Vassell on her efforts to provide Rhode Island students with high-speed internet. We look forward to working with her and other stakeholders on language that would establish a voucher program for internet service and devices to accomplish this goal.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me at Stephanie.Federico@cox.com should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Stephanie L. Federico

Stephanie L. Federico
Vice President – Government and Public Affairs
Cox Communications – Northeast Region

Cc: Members the House Committee on Education
The Honorable Marcia Ranglin-Vassell