



MIDDLETOWN
Rhode Island

Economic Development Advisory Committee

TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN

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February 4, 2022

Rep. Deborah Ruggiero, Chairwoman
House Innovation, Internet, and Technology Committee
State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: H-7083 Rhode Island Broadband Development Program

Dear Rep. Ruggiero and committee members,

I am writing to express my support for the above referenced legislation to create a broadband council and a broadband coordinator to lead the State's efforts to improve high-speed internet access and ensure that all Rhode Island residents benefit from this critical technology. The findings of the recently released *Rhode Island Broadband Analysis*, commissioned by Connect Greater Newport, a regional economic development organization of municipalities, non-profits, and the business community in Newport and Bristol Counties, make clear that there are several areas of the state that are currently underserved. The study confirms what many have believed – the East Bay region in particular lacks adequate broadband internet service, and is classified as “underserved” according to federal guidelines.

For the past several years the Town of Middletown through its staff and the Middletown Economic Development Advisory Committee has worked with other towns and organizations in the region, such as the Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce, to better understand the current level of internet service and options available to residents and businesses. Through this work it has become clear that individual municipalities, and even a regional organization, lack the resources necessary to pursue this effort. This bill, H-7083, would establish a much-needed, coordinated effort at the state level to focus on this issue. It would provide a vehicle to secure available federal funding specifically dedicated to improving broadband internet access in underserved communities.

We have heard from the business community in the East Bay region that improved high-speed internet access, at a reasonable price, is necessary to allow the economy to continue to grow and thrive. I believe that passage of this legislation is a critical step toward reaching that goal.

Thank you for your support in this effort. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Silva, Esq., Chairman
Middletown Economic Development Advisory Committee