



# Town of Portsmouth Economic Development Committee

2200 East Main Road / Portsmouth, Rhode Island 02871

February 9, 2022

*Submitted via e-mail to: Committee chair and clerk.*

To the Honorable House Innovation, Internet, and Technology Committee,

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments in support of H 7083 – The Rhode Island Broadband Development Program.

Intermittent outages and variability in broadband performance continue to plague America's networks, even in geographical areas self-reported by providers as "served" on FCC Form 477. This effect is especially pronounced in Rhode Island, a state claimed by industry representatives as "99.9% served"<sup>1</sup> but where actual user experience paints a drastically different picture—especially in terms of reliability and operational availability.<sup>2</sup>

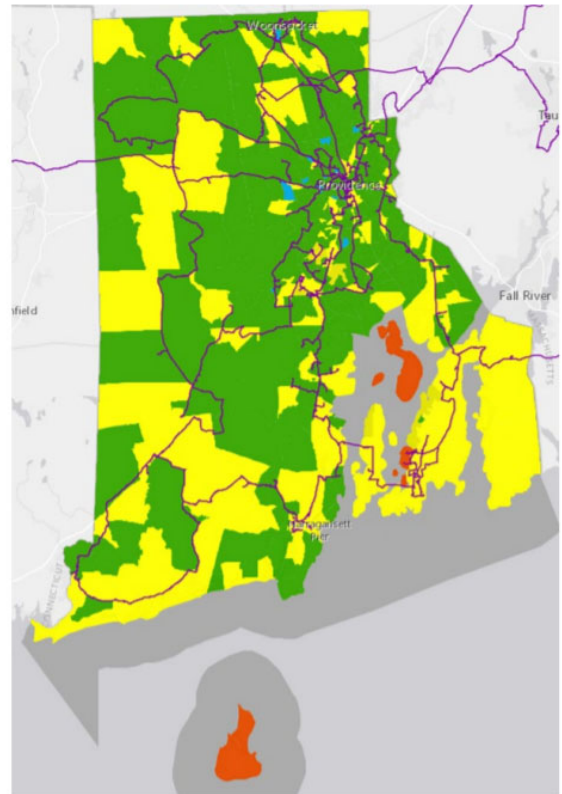


## Census Block-Group Ratings

### Speed Ratings

- Below 25/3, Above 10/1
- Below 100/20, above 50/10
- Below 200/50, above 100/20
- Below 200/200, above 200/50

OSHEAN Fiber



Based on Ookla® Speedtest Intelligence® data from consumer-initiated tests for the period of January 2020 through August 2021

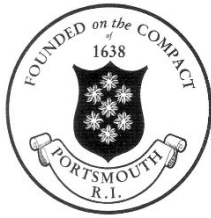
30 September 2021



**Figure 1: Wireline Census Block Speed Ratings (Rhode Island)**

<sup>1</sup> <https://potsandpansbyccg.com/2021/11/15/the-fixation-on-speed>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eastbayri.com/stories/cox-outage-takes-portsmouth-offline,88184>



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We believe that policymaking should encourage robust competition, providing consumers with more dependable, resilient, affordable, and higher-quality broadband service. Fostering competition through additional providers naturally lends itself to improving affordability, accountability and transparency in the broadband marketplace. Locally based ISPs consistently receive higher marks in consumer satisfaction<sup>3</sup>, which is not surprising as local providers are more likely to be accountable to ratepayers that are their neighbors.

The available federal infrastructure funding offers the opportunity to build long-lasting broadband infrastructure capable of supporting the networking demands of today and generations from now. The question is how best to facilitate cooperation between state and local officials to achieve broadband equity.

Without objective, non-biased state-level coordination of efforts, we risk leaving our students and workers even further behind. High quality, competitively-priced broadband is undeniably necessary to attract and retain taxpaying residents, which is why we believe that this should be a top priority for our state government.

We thank you for considering our comments as we work towards digital equity, economic development, resiliency of critical communications infrastructure, and improved educational outcomes for current and future generations of Rhode Islanders.

Respectfully,

Stephen D. Johnson, Chair, Portsmouth Economic Development Committee

Theodore Pietz, Vice Chair, Portsmouth Economic Development Committee

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.consumerreports.org/municipal-broadband/are-city-owned-municipal-broadband-networks-better>