



Honorable Deborah Ruggiero
Chairperson, House Committee on Innovation, Internet and Technology
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

February 9, 2022

RE: HB 7187– Relating to Public Utilities and Carriers- Requires Internet service providers to follow net neutrality requirements serving consumers/state as well as awarding of state contracts with violations resulting in penalty provisions for deceptive trade practice.

Dear Chairperson Ruggiero,

The undersigned members of the Rhode Island Business Coalition would like to express our opposition to HB 7187 – Relating to Public Utilities and Carriers- Requires Internet service providers to follow net neutrality requirements serving consumers/state as well as awarding of state contracts with violations resulting in penalty provisions for deceptive trade practice.

Although we continue to support an open Internet where companies do not block, throttle, or otherwise interfere with the customers' ability to go where they want on the Internet, the undersigned members of the Coalition oppose the adoption of net neutrality laws at the state level. Moving forward with this proposal would make Rhode Island an outlier and could potentially require broadband providers (many of which operate regionally in multiple states, nationally, or internationally) to follow rules and adopt practices that only apply in the Ocean State. Requiring companies to adopt special practices in order to operate in Rhode Island is costly for the companies themselves, and potentially for Rhode Island consumers as well. The cost of complying with these rules will likely be passed along to consumers, which means Rhode Island residents, businesses, and other organizations will have to pay higher prices for broadband service relative to their peers in other states, thus undermining our state's competitiveness. Given our small market size, broadband service providers may also decide that the costs of complying with Rhode Island-only net neutrality rules is simply too high and pull out of Rhode Island altogether. If this occurs, Rhode

Island consumers will have fewer choices for broadband service providers, and fewer options in terms of the services, speeds, and technology available in the state.

Moving forward with adopting net neutrality rules on the state level will do little to guarantee an open Internet, especially in light of Rhode Island's small size and therefore limited ability to affect the national and international marketplace. It could, however, harm Rhode Island consumers by increasing the cost of broadband in the state and/or limiting the options available to residents and businesses. This would only serve to make Rhode Island a more expensive and less attractive state to live, work and do business.

The undersigned members of the Rhode Island Business Coalition respectfully urge the Committee to take no further action on this legislation.

Sincerely,

Rhode Island Society of Certified Public Accountants – Melissa Travis, President

Rhode Island Small Business Economic Summit – Grafton Willey, Tax and Budget Committee Chairman

Rhode Island Manufacturers Association – David M. Chenevert, Executive Director

Newport County Chamber of Commerce – Erin Donovan-Boyle, Executive Director