



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF COMMERCE

Submitted via email

February 11, 2025

The Honorable Jacquelyn M. Baginski
Chair, House Committee on Innovation, Internet, & Technology
State House
82 Smith St.
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H. 5122 – Broadband Deployment and Investment Act

Dear Chair Baginski and Members of the Committee,

Please accept these comments on H. 5122, which would create a broadband community outreach coordinator position within the Division of Public Utilities to assist state residents in accessing the federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The ACP was a program that provided eligible households with a now discontinued \$30 per month subsidy for their internet bill and a one-time benefit of up to \$100 off an eligible device. Due to lack of additional funding from Congress, the ACP ended in all states effective June 1, 2024. We do not anticipate that this program will restart.

During the period when the ACP was active, the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (Corporation) worked diligently to support outreach and awareness of the program, including securing funding for and hiring a community outreach coordinator. The Corporation hosted scores of awareness and enrollment events, which led to Rhode Island having an enrollment percentage that was higher than other New England states and above the national average. At the time of its ending, about 81,000 Rhode Island households benefitted from the ACP. While the ACP ended in June 2024, the Corporation continues to employ a digital equity and community outreach manager to continue our efforts to close the digital divide in Rhode Island. We are happy to meet with members of the committee about the Corporation's ongoing work to support broadband deployment and digital equity.

In short, even though the ACP is no longer active, the Corporation currently employs a role comparable to a broadband community outreach coordinator who conducts outreach to ensure that Rhode Islanders are educated about broadband opportunities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth M. Tanner".

Elizabeth M. Tanner, Esq.
Secretary of Commerce

CC. Honorable Members of the House Committee on Innovation, Internet, & Technology
The Honorable John J. Lombardi
Nicole McCarty, Esq., Chief Legal Counsel