

## Steven Sepe

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**From:** Holly Snyder <holland13ra@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 25, 2024 12:33 PM  
**To:** House Innovation, Internet and Technology Committee  
**Subject:** House Bill 7157

Dear Chair Baginski and members of the House Committee on Innovation, Internet and Technology:

My name is Holly Snyder, and I am a retired librarian who worked for 18 years in higher education at Brown University. I write to you today in wholehearted support of House Bill no. 7157, sponsored by Representative Spears.

In my job as a research librarian tasked with assisting students, faculty, staff and other researchers at Brown University, I saw first hand how vital access to broadband can be. During the initial phase of the COVID19 pandemic, our students and faculty had to rely solely on electronic sources to teach, learn and conduct research. It was my job to connect them with whatever resources I could find that would support their goals, and help them succeed in this most challenging environment. And many, if not most, of them did quite well, overcoming the many difficulties they faced.

I also witnessed how some students struggled to link to their online classes or access research tools due to poor or inconsistent access to broadband from their homes. And, sadly, this was a problem that I was unable to help them resolve.

If the pandemic has taught us nothing else, it should be that access to broadband is no longer a luxury but a basic need. During a time of isolation, broadband allowed us not only to teach, learn, work and research, but also, more vitally, to connect with one another while keeping ourselves and others safe. I was very heartened during the pandemic by Governor Raimondo's efforts to bring broadband into the homes of Rhode Island's school children. But we must do more to eliminate the digital divide that threatens democracy at its most basic level. I believe that every Rhode Islander needs to have access to affordable, reliable high-speed internet service at home, not just at work or at school. Today, high-speed internet access, commonly called broadband, is essential to our daily lives. For older adults like me, this technology improves the quality of life and allows us to age in place in our own homes without having to resort to institutional living.

As a retired person, I especially appreciate how the Federal Affordable Connectivity Program has helped more than 22 million households—including 10 million in my age bracket—get and stay online, ensuring that these households have access to essential services, such as telehealth visits with physicians and virtual appointments with other caregivers, as well as providing the ability to stay connected with friends and loved ones at times when we might otherwise feel isolated. I ask you to give H.B. 7157 your full support.

Sincerely yours,

Holly Snyder  
North Providence