



## Testimony in Support of S-2345

Relating to Public Utilities and Carriers – Broadband Deployment

Senate Committee on Commerce

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**The Economic Progress Institute (EPI) supports Senator Ujifusa’s S-2345**, the Rhode Island Broadband Oversight and Accountability Act of 2026, which would **protect Rhode Island consumers** in our 21<sup>st</sup>-century world of the internet.

Every other year, EPI researches and publishes our keystone report, the ***Rhode Island Standard of Need***, which calculates how much it costs Rhode Islanders from different size families to make ends meet. In the 2024 edition of the report, we included in this basic needs budget – for the first time – **internet access**. This is because internet access has become a basic need, essential for applying for jobs and doing research for purchasing goods and services.

Therefore, we believe we are far past the time that prevents reasonable regulation of broadband services in the name of encouraging expansion. Rather, it is time to institute strong oversight of the broadband industry to protect Rhode Island consumers, especially low-income and modest-income Rhode Islanders – so they have and can maintain access to affordable, quality internet access

In addition, as an organization that seeks to understand how legislation, policies, and programs increase (or decrease) **equity**, we applaud this legislative proposal that calls on the state “To responsibly manage public broadband funds and ensure that service is reliable and equitable” and to protect “equitable access.”

Therefore, we urge the House Corporations Committee to send this legislation to the full Senate for consideration.