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Rhode Island Works Best When We Say **UNION YES.**

April 7, 2026

Chairman Robert Britto
 Senate Commerce Committee
 Rhode Island State House
 Providence, RI 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of SB2345

Dear Chair Britto and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the 80,000 members of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO and our affiliated local union affiliates, I write in support of Senate Bill 2345 introduced by Senator Ujifusa, the Rhode Island Broadband Oversight and Accountability Act.

This legislation takes three straightforward actions:

1. It repeals an outdated 17-year-old law that bars the state from regulating internet-based services;
2. It directs the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation to study and propose a clear structure for broadband authority, staffing, and funding; AND
3. It helps Rhode Island catch up with neighboring states like Massachusetts and Connecticut, which already treat broadband as essential infrastructure.

Rhode Island had to build broadband capacity at Commerce in order to qualify for federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding, the largest broadband infrastructure investment ever made. Without that administrative authority, the state would not have been eligible for more than \$100 million to expand high-speed internet access, especially in underserved areas.

For working people, reliable broadband is no longer a luxury, it is essential infrastructure. Workers rely on high-speed internet to work, apply for jobs, complete training and certifications, access their benefits portals, and communicate with customers and employers. Many jobs now require remote or hybrid work, and without reliable service, some Rhode Islanders are locked out of those opportunities.

Nationally, BEAD funding is being delayed and reconsidered, which creates real risk ahead. States without permanent broadband offices will be at a disadvantage in protecting their plans and responding to new federal requirements. This work requires dedicated staff and clear authority, not temporary arrangements. When broadband is unreliable, unaffordable, or unavailable, working people pay the price, through lost wages, fewer job opportunities, higher costs, and reduced access to essential services.

This bill helps ensure Rhode Island has the capacity to protect workers' interests, secure federal investment, and build modern infrastructure that meet the needs of today's economy. For these reasons, the Rhode Island AFL-CIO urges your support of SB2345.

Sincerely,

Erica A. Hammond
 Legislative Director, Rhode Island AFL-CIO

Patrick Crowley [President](#) • Karen Hazard [Secretary-Treasurer](#)

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