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February 12, 2015

House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

*Re: H. 117: "An act relating to creating a Division for Telecommunications and Connectivity within the Department of Public Service"*

AARP, which has 130,000 members in Vermont, fully supports H. 117, "An act relating to creating a Division for Telecommunications and connectivity within the Department of Public Service." By providing the requisite resources for the Department of Public Service, and by creating a process for key stakeholders to contribute to the state's planning, the proposed legislation would contribute greatly to Vermont's ability to pursue sensible and well-informed broadband policy. Based on AARP's understanding of the proposed legislation, H. 117 is entirely compatible with AARP's vision for a future where all citizens, regardless of their age, income, medical condition, and community, have affordable and reliable access to advanced telecommunications services and capabilities, including broadband Internet access.

AARP is not a newcomer to the state legislative process as it affects telecommunications and broadband services. AARP actively analyzes proposed state telecommunications legislation throughout the country, and as part of that process has considered the impact of many different legislative proposals on AARP members. Among the many bills that AARP has examined, H. 117 stands out because (1) it sets out a well-considered blueprint for achieving widespread broadband deployment, and (2) it incorporates specific mechanisms for all stakeholders to participate in critically important policy making about an issue that has far-reaching consequences for the state's citizens, well-being, and economy. Based on AARP's experience, too often, the future of states' telecommunications infrastructure is left in the hands of industry. As AARP understands H. 117, various stakeholders, including those who represent consumers' interests, along with industry representatives would collaborate on the development of telecommunications policy. Also, state policy makers would be authorized to obtain information from companies so that policy makers need not make important broadband decisions in an information vacuum.

Mr./Ms. Full Name

Date

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AARP has reviewed the bill carefully and does not have any suggested modifications to the language. AARP is hopeful that H. 117 is enacted as it is presently drafted. AARP is also hopeful that the bill is enacted in a timely manner. Moreover, AARP is fully prepared and willing to participate in the state's future deliberations about how to achieve ubiquitous, sufficiently advanced, and affordable broadband Internet access most effectively. AARP members, many of whom are aging in place, increasingly rely on broadband Internet access to connect to community resources, medical support, continuing education, entertainment, connecting with friends and relatives, and participation in civic activities. AARP members would benefit greatly from the enactment of H. 117.

AARP embraces new technology, including broadband Internet access, provided that it is affordable and accessible by all. Vermont has a long tradition of leading the country with forward-looking telecommunications policy. H. 117 would continue that tradition by ensuring that Vermont has the resources to guide the state toward a broadband future that serves all of its communities and all of its citizens.

H. 117 charts a path that will further Vermont's leadership on telecommunications policy. As a rural state, where communities could get left behind in the digital age, Vermont would benefit greatly from H. 117, which will allow it to achieve a broadband network that supports economic development, provision of medical services to remote areas, education, and civic discourse, among other things.

AARP urges the Legislature to pass H. 117 as it is drafted and swiftly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Marchildon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Greg Marchildon  
AARP Vermont State Director