

Dear House Energy and Technology Committee,

On the first day of September, my worries focus on how long the Vermont weather will permit fiber construction and what supplies will not be in stock in time. I also worry about what changes in the legislature will make running (and keeping) my business more challenging!

As a broadband and telephone provider I do not feel appreciated for our work and commitment to our customers. I feel like the legislature is not acknowledging and supporting the work that has been done. **There is so much more that we, as existing providers, can and want to do especially with financial support.** I want to continue to build more fiber to the home!

Franklin started providing “fiber to the home” in the fall of 2013. We actually started FTTH on the dirt roads first! We made the conscious decision to target areas where the copper lines and distance were issues for internet service. It was a business model that put customer needs first. It also disproves that if you build it they will come (i.e. pay for increased service).

Franklin’s fiber customers based on June 2020 data:

- 16% subscribed to 10/1 (the same speed offered over copper DSL)
- 14% subscriber to 50/25 or higher

When the pandemic was declared, we stepped up to the challenge. We ran miles of fiber in locations not planned for this year and began our construction season in March. This was in addition to our “carrier of last resort” obligations of providing and maintain telephone service to every location. COVID-19 has made it even more complex with supply delays and customers’ demands for fiber (but not the top package). Fiber cable ordered this week is scheduled for delivery in April 2021.

What I ask of the legislature is to support and promote the continued buildout by existing providers. We are in a position to efficiently get Vermonter’s broadband service. We can and will build more but we need money to do so.

I love what I do and I want to see my family business continue!

Thank you

Kimberly Gates

Manger, owner, engineering, accounting, customer service, tech support, legislative & regulatory and flagger

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