



60 Main Street, Suite 100
Burlington, Vermont 05401
802-863-3489
lccvermont.org

Representative Timothy Briglin
Chair, House Committee on Energy and Technology
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

February 12, 2021

Chair Briglin,

The pandemic continues to reinforce the importance of high-speed Internet availability, the critical role it plays in Vermont's economy, and the fact that it was underfunded in Vermont for so long. As the House Committee on Energy and Technology works to remedy the above-stated issues we urge you to do so in a manner that leverages all assets currently available to the state.

The broadband bill under consideration in this committee narrows eligibility requirements necessary for accessing state resources. The bill also seeks to establish and fund new and unproven governmental structures, while largely freezing out incumbent service providers who are often able to quickly act on broadband buildout projects. We understand that a diversity of approaches is needed to build out broadband to every Vermonter. We believe incumbent service providers are a key component to this effort and will continue to play an essential role in building new infrastructure in areas they serve if they are provided with a reasonable opportunity to do so. We would ask that in addition, guardrails be placed on funding to ensure that the majority of funding be directed specifically to physical infrastructure and prioritization be towards those entities that can build the infrastructure as soon as possible. Furthermore, we urge caution around any moral obligations and scenarios in which liability might be created that could require the state to absorb losses or be disqualified from further federal funds for this purpose.

As currently considered, this legislation fails to be inclusive of all available partners, in some instances by explicitly limiting financing eligibility to a single borrower type. This has the potential to stifle, rather than expedite the provision of universal broadband access in Vermont. Many Vermonters have waited long enough for access to high-speed internet. We ask that you please re-examine the trajectory of this legislation to leverage all of Vermont's potential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Austin Robert Davis".

Austin Robert Davis
Government Affairs Manager