



February 8, 2022

The Honorable Deborah Ruggiero
Chair
House Innovation, Internet, and Technology Committee

RE: H 7083: “An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government—The Rhode Island Broadband Development Program”

Dear Chair Ruggiero and Committee Members:

On behalf of the more than 6,000 Rhode Island REALTORS® thank you for introducing the “Rhode Island Broadband Development Program.” We appreciate your leadership in the House of Representatives and your commitment to creating a fair expansion of broadband access across Rhode Island.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the value of affordable and reliable high-speed internet. At the same time, the pandemic has shined a light on neighborhoods in Rhode Island where residents and businesses are without access, making remote work and schooling challenging if not impossible. During the pandemic, REALTORS® found innovative ways to conduct business using internet technology. For instance, when REALTORS® were strongly recommended to shut down open houses during the height of the pandemic, our members relied on high-speed internet access to stream and upload videos, host virtual open houses and use electronic transaction processes such as remote online notarization. These are just a few of the commonly used interactive technologies that were instrumental in supporting a strong real estate market in Rhode Island during the last two years.

We know the future will include modern technologies that will only increase the reliability of high-speed internet access. One of the most important takeaways from the pandemic is the need for consistency across communities, so that prospective homeowners and tenants alike have affordable choices when looking for places to call home. Unfortunately, underserved communities are not flourishing for many reasons particularly the lack of infrastructure investments needed expand internet access. We know that thriving communities see an increase in property values, business growth and children receiving quality education when these investments are made.

Thankfully, Rhode Island’s Congressional Delegation has worked relentlessly at guaranteeing our state’s fair share of federal funding in the “American Rescue Plan Act” and the “Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.” By creating the Rhode Island Broadband Development Program”, state leaders will be equipped with resources to build and expand on these efforts in the months and years to come. I urge this committee and the House of Representatives to support H 7083.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David A. Salvatore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David A. Salvatore
Government Affairs Director