



COST Presentation

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STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

COVID-19 BROUGHT THE ISSUE OF DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY AND INCLUSION TO THE FOREFRONT OF CONNECTICUT AND THE REST OF THE UNITED STATES.

BROADBAND AT WELL-SERVED SPEEDS IS ESSENTIAL FOR ALL ASPECTS OF PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY:

- Education
- Employment applications
- Remote working and self-employment, which Governor Lamont states is the “new normal”
- Unemployment insurance and other safety net programs
- Tele-medicine and health care information
- Civic and social engagement
- Essential information on government at all levels
- Entertainment
- And so much more!

FOR CONNECTICUT RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES, BROADBAND IS AN ESSENTIAL UTILITY, AS MUCH AS ELECTRICITY, CLEAN WATER AND HEAT.

CONNECTICUT HAS A HUGE DIGITAL DIVIDE

- 23% OF CONNECTICUT HOUSEHOLDS LACK HIGH-SPEED INTERNET AT HOME.
- 36% OF LOW-INCOME CONNECTICUT HOUSEHOLDS LACK HIGH-SPEED INTERNET AT HOME.
- 36% OF CONNECTICUT RESIDENTS AGE 65+ DO NOT HAVE WIRELINE BROADBAND AT HOME.
- 35% OF HISPANICS LACK WIRELINE BROADBAND AT HOME COMPARED WITH 21% OF WHITES.
- 34% OF AFRICAN AMERICANS DO NOT HAVE WIRELINE BROADBAND.

Source: The Digital Divide in Connecticut (Sept. 2020), John Horrigan, PHD

At the press announcement for the Governor's Everyone Learns Initiative, Governor Lamont stated that the digital divide is a 21st century civil rights issue.

WHAT IS HAPPENING ON THE GROUND IN CONNECTICUT

- MOST OF BROADBAND SERVICE IS PROVIDED BY CABLE COMPANIES.
- FRONTIER COMMUNICATIONS PROVIDES LIMITED BROADBAND SERVICE AND HAS MADE NO COMMITMENT TO MAKE MAJOR UPGRADES TO ITS NETWORK.
- SMALLER COMPETITORS (GO NETSPEED) OFFER GOOD SERVICE BUT ONLY TO SELECT AREAS.
- NORTHWESTERN CONNECTICUT IS EITHER UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED.
- CONNECTICUT HAS NO GRANULAR BROADBAND MAP BASED ON REAL DATA TO MEASURE COVERAGE AND BROADBAND SPEED.
- BROADBAND IS CONSIDERED AN UNREGULATED SERVICE BY PURA.
- AWARENESS OF THE LACK OF PARTICIPATION IN REMOTE LEARNING LAST SPRING HAS INCREASED POLITICAL INTEREST IN THE STATE'S BROADBAND DEFICIENCIES.

SHOULD BROADBAND BE REGULATED?

- WIRELINE BROADBAND IS PROVIDED BY COMPANIES THAT HAVE BEEN AUTHORIZED BY PURA (FORMERLY THE DPUC) TO INSTALL FACILITIES IN THE PUBLIC STREETS AND HIGHWAYS IN CONNECTICUT.
- THE STATE HAS A SUBSTANTIAL INTEREST IN THE SAFETY OF THOSE FACILITIES.
- THE STATE HAS A SUBSTANTIAL INTEREST IN PROTECTING CONSUMER INTERESTS IN SERVICES PROVIDED OVER THOSE FACILITIES.
- THE FCC DOES NOT REGULATE BROADBAND YET TAKES THE POSITION THAT IT CAN PREEMPT STATE REGULATION BY NO REGULATION.
- SOME OTHER STATES ARE TAKING MEASURES TO IMPOSE REQUIREMENTS ON BROADBAND PROVIDERS.
- CONSUMERS NEED TRANSPARENCY FROM PROVIDERS BY RECEIVING RELIABLE INFORMATION ON BROADBAND PRICING, SPEEDS AND SERVICE CHANGES.
- CONNECTICUT NEEDS COOPERATION FROM PROVIDERS TO DEVELOP A STATE BROADBAND MAP WITH GRANULARITY.

HOW WE CAN WORK TOGETHER

- KEEP TRACK OF UNSERVED AREAS IN YOUR TOWNS
- PROVIDE MAPS OF UNSERVED AREAS OR ADDRESSES TO OFFICE OF STATE BROADBAND
- WHEN STATE BROADBAND MAPPING BEGINS, WE WILL COMPARE YOUR DATA ON UNSERVED AREAS WITH MAP DEVELOPMENT
- PLEASE KEEP ME APPRISED OF BROADBAND ISSUES AND CONCERNS
- QUESTIONS?