

Written Testimony to House Consumer Affairs Committee
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an affiliate of the Allegheny Conference
May 25, 2021

Thank you, Majority Chair Marshall and Democratic Chair Matzie, for the opportunity to submit this testimony before the House Consumer Affairs Committee hearing on Telecommunications Deployment in Pennsylvania.

Connectivity is a global priority, and competitor regions are moving ahead quickly – but Pennsylvania is falling behind. Bridging the digital divide through high-speed internet access for the entire 10-county region of southwestern Pennsylvania is more critical now than ever before. As commerce, education and healthcare increase their dependence on this resource, the availability of reliable and affordable connectivity is paramount to create an economy for all and to keep our region competitive.

The Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, the policy and advocacy affiliate of the Allegheny Conference, has been supportive of advancing connectivity efforts – particularly via broadband and 5G – in our region and state over the past few years. Broadband and 5G expansion are at the top of our policy agenda.

We all know that staying connected is vital to every zip code, age, demographic, industry, and household. It is important to note that a lack of coverage is experienced in rural areas – something that rural broadband expansion will address. At the same time, capacity issues often plague urban areas – something that expansion of the 5G network will address.

That is why we believe it is important to support both broadband and 5G. It is our position that both are necessary to build the region of the future, improve our region's equity, enhance our competitiveness, and open opportunities for jobs and education to all regardless of zip code.

The Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce is proud to be one of more than 50 members of the PA Partnership for 5G. We joined the PA Partnership for 5G because we believe it is important to inform the public about the future of connectivity and its merits for Pennsylvania. The Partnership's mission is two-fold: to educate Pennsylvanians about 5G technology and the infrastructure required to support it, and advocate for statewide legislation that serves to promote small cell deployment throughout the commonwealth.

Technology continues to evolve and change the way we live, work, access healthcare, recreate and educate, laying the groundwork for Pennsylvania and our region to invest in groundbreaking technologies. 5G will play an important role in innovation, and it also plays a role in connectivity for everyone.

The business community views this as not only a competitiveness issue – where we need to make sure we have the connectivity infrastructure and technology that employers need and want, but this is quality of life and equity issue – where we need to make sure our communities and residents can affordably and reliably connect to school, work, access healthcare and the like. We know that 5G technology will have major economic implications, in our region and beyond. According to various studies, the emergence of 5G will create 3 million new jobs, and produce \$500 billion in GDP and \$275 billion in private investment in the U.S. alone.

The Chamber supports new legislation along the lines of House Bill 1400 from the last legislative session that would create a statewide, uniform framework for the deployment of small cell nodes, the backbone of 5G technology. Legislation that aims to set standards for fees, provide a streamlined permitting process and encourage an environment that enables small cell deployment would benefit all communities across the commonwealth.

Investment in 5G and broadband infrastructure will bridge the digital divide, create a more equitable region, and power tomorrow's economy. Delay in action will only further place us, as a commonwealth, behind the competition. Moreover, with the expectation of robust federal infrastructure investment this year, we must lay the groundwork now to be able to capture this potential investment. I urge our legislative partners to move this issue forward in a bipartisan fashion.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Pittsburgh region's business perspective. We look forward to our continued collaboration with our public and private partners to advance this important issue.