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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 429 Session of  
2017

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INTRODUCED BY PHILLIPS-HILL, SNYDER, BIZZARRO, R. BROWN, DAVIS,  
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AUGUST 15, 2017

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, AUGUST 15, 2017

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A RESOLUTION

1 Establishing a legislative task force on the delivery of high-  
2 speed broadband services and directing the Joint State  
3 Government Commission to establish an advisory committee to  
4 conduct a study on the delivery of high-speed broadband  
5 services in unserved areas and underserved areas of this  
6 Commonwealth and to report its findings and recommendations  
7 to the House of Representatives.

8 WHEREAS, Effective economic development today requires  
9 unprecedented levels of collaboration and communication among  
10 State and local government, business, education, health care,  
11 tourism and community leaders; and

12 WHEREAS, High-speed Internet access has become an essential  
13 element of economic vitality; and

14 WHEREAS, High-speed broadband availability increases  
15 individual worker productivity, breaks down the traditional  
16 geographic barriers to jobs and careers in high-paying fields  
17 and connects Pennsylvania businesses to international markets  
18 around the world; and

19 WHEREAS, Small towns and rural communities across this

1 Commonwealth are the cradle of the best of American ingenuity,  
2 potential and values; and

3 WHEREAS, Without sufficient access to broadband and a high  
4 level of use of available technology, these small towns and  
5 rural communities and their residents will remain  
6 technologically and economically isolated and competitively  
7 disadvantaged; and

8 WHEREAS, The availability of high-speed broadband in  
9 Pennsylvania is continuing to increase across multiple  
10 technological platforms, but certain locations and communities  
11 are either underserved, having insufficient broadband speeds to  
12 fully leverage the benefits of the technology, or are unserved  
13 altogether; and

14 WHEREAS, Eliminating unserved areas and underserved areas in  
15 this Commonwealth will provide educational, economic, health,  
16 governance and public safety benefits to all residents; and

17 WHEREAS, The basic requirements for successfully expanding  
18 the benefits of high-speed broadband to all residents of this  
19 Commonwealth are:

20 (1) access to computers, whether privately owned or  
21 leased or provided at public locations as a public benefit;

22 (2) access to reliable broadband services at affordable  
23 prices and at speeds required for current and future  
24 applications; and

25 (3) knowledge to effectively use those computers and the  
26 Internet;

27 and

28 WHEREAS, High-speed broadband infrastructure:

29 (1) allows communities to engage the world with their  
30 goods and services;

1 (2) allows industries which are reliant upon traditional  
2 manufacturing to use the Internet to expand their markets and  
3 make their operations even more efficient;

4 (3) promotes the use of agricultural technology to help  
5 farmers:

6 (i) maintain online field, mapping, water  
7 management, livestock and accounting records; and

8 (ii) develop machinery that can operate virtually on  
9 its own; and

10 (4) allows professionals in rural communities to work or  
11 run businesses from their homes;

12 and

13 WHEREAS, High-speed broadband brings educational  
14 opportunities, improved health care, more effective government  
15 services and a better quality of life to all residents of this  
16 Commonwealth; and

17 WHEREAS, Companies selling technology-intensive products and  
18 services, or companies with technologically advanced operations,  
19 generally provide faster growth in employment and income than  
20 companies without such capabilities; and

21 WHEREAS, Studies show that as much as 85% of the growth in  
22 per capita income over the past 150 years has resulted from  
23 technological change; and

24 WHEREAS, Technology-intensive private sector jobs on average  
25 pay wages which are 85% to 95% higher than wages paid for  
26 private sector jobs that are not technology-intensive; and

27 WHEREAS, The President and Congress gave the Federal  
28 Communications Commission (FCC) several tasks to complete in the  
29 effort to make broadband or high-speed access to the Internet  
30 available to all Americans, based on the belief that every

1 American needs to have access to broadband to have the doors of  
2 economic and social opportunity open to them, which required the  
3 FCC to:

4 (1) develop a forward-looking national broadband plan to  
5 ensure that all Americans have access to broadband  
6 capability;

7 (2) contribute to efforts of the United States  
8 Department of Commerce and the United States Department of  
9 Agriculture to award \$7.2 billion in grants, loans and loan  
10 guarantees to hasten the introduction of the facilities  
11 needed to provide broadband and educate consumers to use this  
12 infrastructure; and

13 (3) collect and report far more detailed and  
14 comprehensive information on the status of broadband  
15 deployment, adoption and use, including how broadband service  
16 in the United States compares to broadband service in other  
17 countries;

18 and

19 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth's efforts to secure the  
20 availability of high-speed broadband throughout urban, suburban  
21 and rural areas of this Commonwealth has been fragmented,  
22 resulting in a lack of coordination among multiple State  
23 agencies and commissions overseeing various broadband-related  
24 programs, projects and Federal and State funding; therefore be  
25 it

26 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives establish a  
27 legislative task force on the delivery of high-speed broadband  
28 services; and be it further

29 RESOLVED, That the task force be comprised of the chairperson  
30 and minority chairperson of the Consumer Affairs Committee of

1 the House of Representatives or a designee of the chairperson or  
2 minority chairperson; and be it further

3       RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the Joint  
4 State Government Commission to assist the task force and conduct  
5 a study on the delivery of high-speed broadband services in  
6 unserved areas and underserved areas of this Commonwealth; and  
7 be it further

8       RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission, as part  
9 of its study, establish an advisory committee consisting of  
10 approximately 25 members from across this Commonwealth,  
11 including:

12           (1) the Secretary of Agriculture or a designee;

13           (2) the Secretary of Community and Economic Development  
14 or a designee;

15           (3) the Deputy Secretary for Technology and Innovation  
16 in the Department of Community and Economic Development or a  
17 designee;

18           (4) the Secretary of Education or a designee;

19           (5) the Secretary of Health or a designee;

20           (6) the Secretary of Labor and Industry or a designee;

21           (7) the Secretary of Policy and Planning or a designee;

22           (8) the Secretary of Administration or a designee;

23           (9) the executive director of the Governor's Center for  
24 Local Government Services of the Pennsylvania Municipal  
25 League or a designee;

26           (10) the chairperson of the Pennsylvania Public Utility  
27 Commission or a designee;

28           (11) the vice chairperson of the Pennsylvania Public  
29 Utility Commission or a designee;

30           (12) the Small Business Advocate or a designee;

1 (13) the Consumer Advocate or a designee;

2 (14) the director of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania  
3 or a designee;

4 (15) representatives of broadband service providers and  
5 any related cable, wireless or other technology industries or  
6 associations within this Commonwealth; and

7 (16) representatives of other departments, agencies,  
8 boards, commissions or entities that the Joint State  
9 Government Commission deems appropriate in conducting the  
10 study under this resolution;

11 and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission develop  
13 reports in collaboration with the advisory committee which, at a  
14 minimum, include the following:

15 (1) background information which addresses the matters  
16 set forth in this resolution;

17 (2) recommendations to:

18 (i) improve the delivery of high-speed broadband  
19 services to unserved areas and underserved areas of this  
20 Commonwealth; and

21 (ii) extend the benefits of advanced high-speed  
22 broadband technology to every community in this  
23 Commonwealth through collaborative partnerships with  
24 governmental and private sector stakeholders; and

25 (3) proposed legislation which relates to the proposed  
26 recommendations and specifically addresses the delivery of  
27 high-speed broadband services to rural high-cost areas of  
28 this Commonwealth;

29 and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission may, as

1 it deems necessary, hold informational meetings to receive  
2 testimony from professionals or consumers with expertise or  
3 knowledge in the matters described in this resolution; and be it  
4 further

5       RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission issue an  
6 initial report of its findings and recommendations to the House  
7 of Representatives no later than one year after the adoption of  
8 this resolution; and be it further

9       RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission issue  
10 four additional annual reports of its findings and  
11 recommendations to the House of Representatives, each of which  
12 shall be issued no later than one year after the issuance of the  
13 immediately prior report.