From: Laura Lewis
To: Pinney, Jeb E (PSC)
Subject: Please Prioritize Rural Broadband Expansion in Kentucky By Strengthening Regulations
Date: Thursday, July 29, 2021 5:30:09 PM

Dear Commissioner J.E.B. Pinney,

I am appreciative of the Kentucky Public Service Commission's leadership on critical broadband issues and encouraged by your ongoing efforts to address the barriers to deployment that are holding back nearly 300,000 Kentuckians living without reliable, high-speed broadband access.

The regulations you proposed last month as part of the ongoing utility pole attachment proceeding are a step in the right direction, but further action is needed to accelerate broadband deployment and expand access to rural communities across the Commonwealth.

Pole attachments are the lifeline of rural broadband, and the primary means of getting high-speed internet into unserved, rural areas of Kentucky. Without the ability to access utility poles in an efficient and cost-effective manner, rural broadband deployment grinds to a halt. Dozens of members of the General Assembly, local elected officials, and other interested parties recognize this fact and have commented in this proceeding on the importance of establishing clear, consistent, and fair pole attachment regulations. In fact, in November 2020, the Pegasus Institute identified the pole replacement process as a primary barrier to broadband deployment in its report on "Exploring Barriers to Kentucky Broadband Expansion."

This is why I am urging the Commission to further clarify and strengthen the utility pole replacement regulations to ensure broadband providers and pole owners are paying their fair share of costs.

Your decisions on these critical broadband policies have the potential to increase the availability of high-speed broadband for more Kentuckians across the Commonwealth and all the undeniable benefits and opportunities it brings.

Kentucky has the resources needed to expand broadband access. Now, the Commission can help ensure broadband is deployed to rural areas more quickly so that we can connect every corner of our state.

I encourage you to take further action on these policies to ensure no Kentuckian is left behind.

Sincerely,
Laura Lewis
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