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RE: Utility Pole Attachment Regulations

Chairman Schmitt, Commissioner Matthews & Commissioner Chandler:

As County Judge-Executives that serve communities across the Commonwealth, we are writing to encourage the Public Service Commission to utilize the ongoing pole attachment regulation process to help drive the timely advancement of broadband internet access for Kentucky's rural families and businesses. Access to affordable and reliable, high-speed broadband service is essential to the continued growth and vitality of our Counties. Unfortunately, far too many rural families and businesses do not have this critical infrastructure available to them. However, common-sense broadband infrastructure access rules, like those pending consideration in the current pole attachment proceeding, will improve access for families and businesses.

The Commission has an opportunity to take action now to help broadband providers move forward with the necessary investments to make high-speed internet service availability a near-term reality for Kentucky's rural families, farm operators, and other businesses. We believe the Commission's pending rulemaking should tackle the issues that are unnecessarily driving up the cost of broadband expansion in rural areas. This includes effectively addressing issues such as pole replacement cost allocation and the Make Ready processes, which can enable broadband providers to build-out their networks more quickly and to avoid unnecessary costs. In both cases, all parties would benefit from the Commission providing clear guidance on who has responsibility to take action, under what timeframes, and most importantly how utility pole-related costs will be equitably shared by all parties.

There are as many as 300,000 homes and businesses across Kentucky that do not have access to broadband. As elected leaders, we are committed to helping our constituents get access to reliable, high-speed broadband as soon as possible. It is a top priority for us. If the Commission fails to take the appropriate actions now, there is real risk that our state's pole attachment rules will impede the ability of broadband providers to move forward with the investments necessary to make this priority a reality for our constituents.

That is why we appreciate the Commission's focus on this issue and encourage you to enact policies that will make a real difference to Kentucky's broadband future.

Sincerely,

Signed County Judge-Executives