

3 February, 2022

Virginia House of Delegates General Laws Subcommittee #2

Submitted via https://hodspeak.house.virginia.gov/submit_testimony?meeting_id=11208

Re: House Bill 1265 Broadband affordability plan

Chairman Wampler and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB1265 in the 2022 legislative session.

Loudoun Broadband Alliance (LBA) is a non-profit organization that exists to promote development of **accessible**, **reliable**, and **affordable** broadband Internet access for everyone.

In 2019, Pew Research reported that 17% of adults in the U.S. used only a smartphone to access the Internet. Of those, 50% reported that cost was the barrier that prevented them from subscribing to in-home broadband services. That rounds out to approximately 27 million American adults that cannot afford broadband in their home.

The national non-profit, Education Superhighway, claims that over 450,000 Virginia households have access to the Internet, but cannot afford to be connected. They also report that up to 86% of those Virginians eligible for broadband affordability programs have not enrolled.

In LBA's home, Loudoun County, over 20% of students qualify as low income for free and reduced school lunch (2019 data) and 3% of households live with an income under the federal poverty level for a household of 4. Yet, in Loudoun County, less than 1% of households are enrolled in the federal Affordable Connectivity Program.

There is a clear need to better understand who in Virginia is falling into the Broadband Gap due to their inability to afford service. There is also a clear need to ensure those that are eligible for broadband affordability programs are aware of them and are enrolled. Passage of HB1265 will provide the Commonwealth with an unquestionable directive to ensure these issues are addressed.

Sincerely,

Kevin A. Noll
President
Loudoun Broadband Alliance
140B Purcellville Gateway Dr, Suite 547
Purcellville, VA 20132

Cc: Delegate Suhas Subramanyam via eMail to DeISSubramanyam@house.virginia.gov
Cc: Delegate David LaRock via eMail to DeIDLARock@house.virginia.gov