



General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Joint State Government Commission
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***Report Summary in Response to Senate Resolution 47 of 2019
Delivery of High-Speed Broadband Services in Unserved
and Underserved Areas of the Commonwealth***

Second Annual Report

Senate Resolution 47, Printer's No. 951, adopted on June 26, 2019, created a legislative task force on high-speed broadband services, and directed the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a study on the delivery of high-speed broadband services in unserved and underserved areas of the Commonwealth. The Commission was further directed to establish an advisory committee to assist in its study. The advisory committee included representatives from Commonwealth agencies with an interest in broadband delivery, as well as Internet service providers, and related cable, wireless, and other technology industries and associations. Nationally, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to highlight the need for expanded connectivity in rural areas as well as pockets of urban areas that are unserved by high-speed Internet.

This is the second of five reports the Commission. The first part of this report will focus on the Advisory Committee's recommendation that a single statewide authority be created to encourage and support broadband expansion and deployment. The remainder of the report will include updated information on the topics addressed in the 2020 report, including the role of broadband in the fields of education, healthcare, agriculture, tourism, and community and economic development, barriers to development, funding resources, recent developments in Pennsylvania state and local initiatives, recent activities and legislative enactments in other states, and efforts to identify unserved and underserved communities in Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Broadband Authority is to be governed by a 25-member board of directors representing all interested stakeholders in broadband expansion and deployment, including government agencies, internet service providers, consumers, non-governmental entities, and persons representing rural and urban communities.

The authority will serve as a single point of contact for entities wishing to develop and deploy broadband internet services in the Commonwealth, coordinate opportunities to access federal funding, non-governmental entity funding and other funding sources. The authority is directed to maintain a centralized database of all broadband deployment activities within the Commonwealth to avoid duplication of efforts and overbuilding of capacity, maintain an inventory of unserved locations, locations where infrastructure is available, locations where new infrastructure may be needed, the quality of available services, including speed of data transmission and cost of services, and any other relevant information. Educational materials and public information campaigns are authorized to help address digital literacy issues. A publicly accessible resource website is also provided.

While CARES Act funding has stimulated broadband expansion in many of Pennsylvania's counties, this is one-time funding and funding for future sustainability and development is also needed. The Authority is authorized to seek and receive funding from public and private sources, and is further authorized to issue revenue bonds to finance its loan and grant programs. These loans and grants are available for broadband expansion and development, with the Authority's initial focus on a Last Mile Program to encourage investment in and deployment of broadband from provider installations to the consumers' residences.

Additional information is included in the updated sections of the report regarding small business broadband opportunities, new funding resources, affordability issues and broadband expansion in public housing.

The full report is available on our website <http://jsg.legis.state.pa.us/>