

Members of the House Consumer Affairs Committee:

On behalf of the East Pittsburgh Borough Council, I would like to express our support for the Telecommunications Market Competition Act (HB 1608).

It's often told that East Pittsburgh was home to an early demonstration of a new medium that would go on to transform our lives – television. That took place at the old Westinghouse laboratories in 1928. But over the course of several decades, we have seen the technology at our finger tips change, and change dramatically. And the speed at which new innovations are brought to the market and transform our lives has increased exponentially over the last 15 to 20 years.

Although not a new phenomenon, more and more Pennsylvania households are cutting the proverbial cord and relying solely on their wireless phones or Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) calling. This trend has continued at an unabated pace over the years. But unlike year's past, we are witnessing a transition to new forms of communication via wireless devices and broadband Internet. Instead of phone calls, more and more Americans are sending text messages and using video conferencing tools like Skype. And with proliferation of high-speed wireless and broadband networks, these communication types provide a richer experience than ever. But even still, the marketplace is continuing to evolve to meet consumers' needs. Nowadays, consumers can use text messaging applications that use WiFi networks to communicate with friends and family without relying on traditional cellular networks.

This is all to say that technology remains a dynamic force in our lives and it is enabling new modes of communication.

Surprisingly, regulations governing communications technology in Pennsylvania have not changed as the technology around us has. Surely, it would seem presumptuous to argue that the laws and regulations that were put on the books so many years ago do not require evaluation and reform while so much has changed.

Therefore, we support the practical reforms of HB 1608. This legislation recognizes the competitive landscape of today's telecommunications market. It will modernize the state's telecommunications laws to encourage more competition and innovation. It will eliminate unnecessary and costly outdated regulatory reporting requirements that deprive resources that could otherwise be spent on deploying new technologies. And among other things, it retains Public Utility Commission oversight of quality of service standards and retains important services like Lifeline.

It is the right combination of reforms for Pennsylvania's future. We hope that you will support this bill and see to its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important measure.