

**BUCKS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

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Mr. Chairman, members of the House Consumer Affairs Committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Telecommunications Market Competition Act (HB 1608).

The Bucks County Economic Development Corporation is strongly in favor of this bill.

As it has in Bucks County, the proliferation of high-speed communication networks and new high-tech devices and services has had a profound and positive effect on Pennsylvania's economy over the years. These advancements have changed the way people live, shop, work, and provided entrepreneurs new ways to grow their businesses.

The innovations we take for granted today have been spurred in part by the billions of dollars the state's telecommunications have made in their networks over the years. So far, this network investment, coupled with robust competition in the marketplace, has brought tremendous benefits to Pennsylvania's consumers and business, which can choose from multiple providers offering an array of products and services at reasonable prices.

However, we believe we have now arrived at a crossroad that has significant implications for Pennsylvania's future. The new communications networks that are so integral to the Keystone State's economy are governed by rules and regulations that don't reflect today's competitive and technological realities. The old rules are a relic of a long-gone era where one monopoly company provided landline telephone services. Increased competition, new technologies, and new consumer habits have rendered those regulations ineffective and unnecessary. They no longer serve the public good but rather impede potential investment within the state.

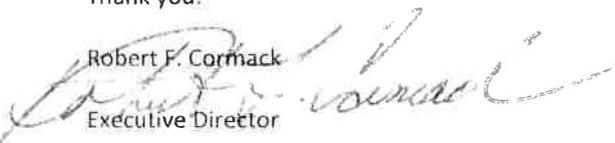
To ensure continued investment in the networks and technologies that empower so much of the Pennsylvania economy, we must modernize these antiquated regulations to address new realities. We live in a time when phone companies, cable TV operators and wireless service providers aggressively compete among each other.

And lest we forget, technology has exponentially outpaced the traditional landlines those regulations were designed for. In fact, according to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reports, nearly 3 million Pennsylvanians have disconnected their landlines over the last decade as they have shifted to new technology offerings like wireless and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP).

Fortunately, House Bill 1608 appropriately reforms the rules to reflect the technologies and competitive marketplace of our time. By treating all providers equally, it promotes continued investment within the state that is crucial to creating jobs and bolstering consumer choices. Furthermore, this legislation preserves important standards and oversight to protect consumers throughout the state's rural and urban communities.

We believe House Bill 1608 provides the Legislature a unique opportunity to advance reforms that will modernize archaic regulations and foster an environment that will promote renewed investment and innovation not just in Bucks County, but across the state. Therefore, members of the House Consumer Affairs Committee should support House Bill 1608 and enact these commonsense reforms this year.

Thank you.

  
Robert F. Cormack  
Executive Director