

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

May 6, 2010

The Honorable Gary F. Locke  
Secretary  
United States Department of Commerce  
Herbert Clark Hoover Building  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Room 5858  
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Larry Strickling  
Administrator  
National Telecommunications and  
Information Administration  
Herbert Clark Hoover Building  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room 4898  
Washington, DC 20230

  
  
Dear Secretary Locke and Administrator Strickling:

As you know, I have been an early, strong, and consistent supporter of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and its implementation. As Chairman of the Senate Communications and Technology Subcommittee, I have taken a particular and specific interest in the broadband stimulus program and I am appreciative of the consideration the grant applications coming from Massachusetts received in the first round. I am writing today in strong support of the most important broadband stimulus application Massachusetts still has pending, MassBroadband 123.

At a recent Senate hearing focusing on broadband and small businesses, I pointed to a map of western Massachusetts highlighting areas that are either entirely unserved or woefully underserved in terms of broadband access. It revealed broad swaths of towns where small businesses and people have no access to high speed broadband, whole communities where lives, schools, and businesses are negatively impacted as a result. That is why our Governor, local leaders, state legislators, and business leaders have constructed a broadband stimulus grant application that I think is the best in its class. The MassBroadband 123 proposal was aptly named after the one hundred and twenty three towns that our team aims at last to connect to high-speed, readily accessible Internet services.

Thousands of my constituents have written to support western Massachusetts' application. Many are small business owners and all are frustrated. The MassBroadband 123 proposal will build an open broadband backbone to which private providers can connect and link homes and small businesses to speeds they can only dream about today. It will make telecommuting possible for many who can't achieve it today, and no longer will businesses based in Western Massachusetts be denied the chance to reach customers and markets in Western Europe via the Internet.

Funding the MassBroadband 123 grant is critical to making broadband access in my state a reality for all of my constituents. Without it, the Berkshires and its surrounding towns will not have any real access to broadband anytime soon. The topography of the region which makes it a beautiful place to raise a family and enjoy outdoor activities also makes it a difficult and

comparatively costly environment over which to build the fiber connections necessary to make broadband available. But without this link to vital modern commerce, the region cannot compete for the work and customers more densely populated regions can access with the click of a mouse.

I understand that the MassBroadband 123 application has entered due diligence and that you cannot discuss it while it is under review, but I wanted to reiterate my reasons for supporting the application and urge a fair and fast review. MassBroadband123's application already addresses much of what I understand is commonly vetted during the due diligence process. It builds on a previous application from the region and reflects hardheaded reevaluation of the original proposal against those funded in the first round. It includes necessary adjustments to insure that it meets all of the requirements the agency has put forward.

Measured against the criteria the NTIA outlined -- including the area's needs, the backing and partnership the project receives, its economic return for the region, the connection to community colleges, and the overall cost of the project -- the MassBroadband 123 proposal is right on target. Therefore, I believe a quick review is appropriate and that a fair review will result in approval.

Sincerely,



John F. Kerry

*Thank you for your consideration.*