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Gov. Wolf Celebrates Effort to Close Digital Divide in Pennsylvania through Creation of Pennsylvania Broadband Authority

Harrisburg, PA – Acknowledging that broadband is essential to success in the commonwealth, Governor Tom Wolf today celebrated the creation of Pennsylvania’s Broadband Development Authority, which will manage at least \$100 million in federal aid to coordinate the rollout of broadband across Pennsylvania.

“Broadband is as essential today as electricity and water. But there is a digital divide in Pennsylvania,” said Gov. Wolf. “This Broadband Authority will close the divide and ensure consistent, affordable, quality statewide broadband to keep children learning, businesses growing, and opportunities abounding for all Pennsylvanians.”

In December, Gov. Wolf [signed House Bill 2071](#) to create the Pennsylvania Broadband Authority to serve as a one stop shop for all things broadband in Pennsylvania.

“Without reliable high-speed internet, kids can’t do their homework and local businesses can’t compete,” said U.S. Senator Bob Casey. “We passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to help solve this very problem. The formation of the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority, enacted into law by Gov. Wolf, is a critical step in Pennsylvania using the hundreds of millions of dollars coming to the commonwealth for broadband thanks to the infrastructure law. With access to high-speed internet, kids can keep up in school, small businesses can reach more customers and families can stay connected. This is an investment in our communities, our children and their future.”

Pain from lack of reliable broadband is found statewide and was exacerbated over the past two years as Pennsylvanians relied on virtual means of communication, work, and learning. While rural counties are especially vulnerable, communities outside of Pennsylvania’s biggest cities are also left behind because of inaccessibility or affordability. At least 500,000 Pennsylvanians are without broadband, this lack of access slows economic growth and limits opportunity.

“It is alarming that still today, I hear the troubling stories of rural communities where internet access remains unavailable. The fact that this is still an issue plaguing rural communities in our commonwealth is simply unacceptable,” said Superintendent of Wyalusing Area School District Dr. Jason Bottiglieri, representing the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small

Schools. “While nearly every Pennsylvanian has likely experienced a dropped cell phone call or experienced frustration with an internet outage, our rural communities deal with this every day. Imagine learning in that environment, imagine working or running a business in that environment, imagine not having access to conduct medical research, or being denied equal access to quality doctors and mental health services that can be delivered via telemedicine. We cannot allow a child's zip code to dictate their success.”

HB2071 was championed by a bipartisan workgroup that included members of the Administration and the General Assembly. Representatives Pam Snyder and Martin Causer, and Senator John Kane joined today’s celebration.

“The creation of the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority is just the beginning step to connect millions of Pennsylvanians to high-speed internet,” Rep. Snyder said. “Now the commonwealth has a single entity that can solely focus on making sure that every resident has equal and affordable access to broadband, no matter where they live.”

“The bipartisan broadband legislation I sponsored is a game changer for our state. With the Authority in place, we will have the kind of comprehensive plan and coordinated effort we need to maximize broadband funding to rollout high-speed connectivity in every part of our state,” said Rep. Causer. “Thank you to my colleagues in the Legislature and Gov. Wolf for your support of this important legislation.”

The Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority is made of an 11-member board. The board includes the secretaries of the Pennsylvania Departments of Agriculture, Community and Economic Development, Education, General Services, and Budget; the executive director for the Center for Rural Pennsylvania; chairperson from the Pennsylvania Utilities Commission; and four legislative members.

“Two months ago, we passed a historic bill to establish Pennsylvania's Broadband Development Authority, the first entity of its kind in the history of the commonwealth. I was honored to be appointed to the board of the Authority, and I'm thrilled about the work we started at today's meeting,” said Senator Kane. “As a commonwealth, we have the chance to make a major investment in expanding our broadband infrastructure to ensure all Pennsylvanians are covered, while creating good-paying, family-sustaining jobs in the process. I look forward to working with this bipartisan group moving forward to make sure all Pennsylvanians have access to this essential utility.”

Gov. Wolf has worked to improve broadband access throughout his administration. In 2018, the Wolf Administration launched a [\\$35 million Pennsylvania Broadband Investment Incentive Program](#) to expand broadband in rural areas.

In 2021, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development launched the Unserved High-Speed Broadband Funding Program to further support the deployment of high-speed broadband infrastructure to unserved areas with \$10 million in funding.

The creation of the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority is a step to provide broadband access to all Pennsylvanians and put the commonwealth on a path to a brighter future.

MEDIA CONTACT: Elizabeth Rementer, ra-gvgovpress@pa.gov, 717-783-1116