

HB 18-1099



EMPOWERED CITIES AND TOWNS, UNITED FOR A STRONG COLORADO

BROADBAND

LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR BROADBAND GRANTS

HB 18-1099: YOUR "YES" VOTE RESPECTFULLY REQUESTED

CML is in full support of HB 18-1099, sponsored by Reps. Catlin and McLachlan and Sen. Coram, which would require a fair process when a grant is awarded by the Broadband Deployment Board.

2014 legislation created the Broadband Deployment Board. When the Board issues a grant to a private telecommunications company to underwrite the cost of the proposed project, the statutes allow the local incumbent provider to exercise a "right of first refusal" and take the grant dollars from the other provider. However, there is no requirement they build what the initial provider pledged to build.

The absurd result of this policy is that the incumbent provider can provide service that is slower than it would have been, and there are no restrictions on how much the incumbent provider can charge for that service. The result is that rural Colorado residents, businesses, schools, hospitals and local governments — already suffering from painfully slow broadband, if they have any at all — are dealt a bad hand they can't get rid of.

HB 18-1099 will rectify this practice. An incumbent provider exercising a right of first refusal would have to complete the project with at least the same speed as the original grantee and must do so at least at the same price to the end user. This is fundamental fairness that the General Assembly has the responsibility to legislate if there is genuine concern for the sustainability of rural Colorado.

CML urges the General Assembly to reject the requests of those asking for a "no" vote on the bill that would signify a vote for the status quo. Even worse, a "no" vote might translate to a slower, more expensive alternative.

CML respectfully requests your "yes" vote on HB 18-1099.

February 27, 2018