



NEWS RELEASE

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FCC Commissioner Talks Broadband Hurdles at Congressional Roundtable

BCAP expresses concern with worker classifications, permitting

ALTOONA – The Broadband Communications Association of Pennsylvania (BCAP) expressed its concern and frustration with the federal Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment program directly to FCC Commissioner Brendan Carr during a roundtable discussion hosted by Congressman John Joyce (R-Blair) in Altoona on Tuesday.

“The No. 1 issue in Pennsylvania is the prevailing wage statute,” said BCAP President Todd Eachus. “The state is applying the wrong classification to these projects which ultimately drives up project costs. We have simply asked for an appropriate classification of teledata lineman or cable splicer instead of the vastly more expensive electric lineman.”

Eachus explained that broadband workers are not trained in the high-voltage space on poles and have different responsibilities during builds that should not be compared to electric linemen. The increased hourly rate stresses the finite amount of funding, resulting in fewer locations being served.

Eachus, along with other broadband representatives, also touched upon the federal government’s definition of affordability and how those artificially low rates would prevent providers from applying for BEAD funding. The rate should be market driven and not set by government.

In addition to labor concerns, the group, consisting of business, education, agriculture and health care leaders, spoke about permitting processes at the local level. Couple that with pole attachment delays, providers do not see deployment reaching unserved locations any time soon.

“It has been 995 days since the bill was passed but not a single home or business has been connected or a single turn of the shovel with this money,” Carr said. “It’s definitely not too late to course correct.”

Carr said that federal permitting must be addressed: “They’re stepping on the gas while applying the brakes at the same time.”

“We need all potential providers to step up,” Joyce said. “We can all agree that almost 1,000 days is unacceptable. We are committed to working together to make this happen.”

The Broadband Communications Association of Pennsylvania, a member-driven organization based in Harrisburg, actively promotes broadband cable and telecommunications industry issues in Pennsylvania. BCAP – the nation’s first state cable association – represents cable operators, programmers and equipment suppliers that collectively provide service to nearly 3 million Pennsylvania households and businesses.

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