

March 3, 2016

RE: HB 1180

Dear Members of the NH House of Representatives:

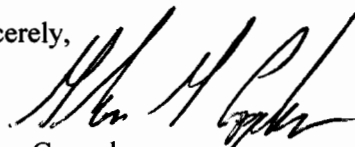
I am writing to share the perspective of the NH Association of Regional Planning Commissions (NHARPC) relative to House Bill 1180. The bill as proposed would enable municipalities greater flexibility in issuing bonds to facilitate the placement of broadband infrastructure in their community. We believe the bill has merit for several reasons including:

- Access to affordable broadband/high speed internet is a necessity for all of New Hampshire in order to maintain vibrant economies and quality of life. Yet many parts of our state are unserved or underserved. As these tend to be the more rural parts of the state, they are showing signs of falling behind and are less able to remain economically viable.
- Broadband is critical to a region's ability to attract a quality workforce and is considered basic infrastructure to retain younger adults in our communities.
- Broadband is required by multiple sectors including business, education, government, health/medicine, and emergency response. Without access, these sectors fall behind in their ability to provide state-of-the-art functionality.
- In a 2015 report entitled *Broadband: The Connection to New Hampshire's Future* prepared by the University of New Hampshire in conjunction with the NH Office of Energy and Planning, NH Department of Resources and Economic Development, and the state's nine regional planning commissions, the case is clearly made regarding the importance of broadband in today's society. The report contains 37 recommendations, one of which calls for enabling legislation to extend municipal financing of broadband expansion projects through bonding authority – precisely that suggested by HB 1180.
- As HB 1180 represents enabling legislation, it does not require or obligate a municipality to issue bonds for broadband expansion – rather, it simply provides an option for consideration by municipalities. Why would we not provide this option in the municipal toolbox?

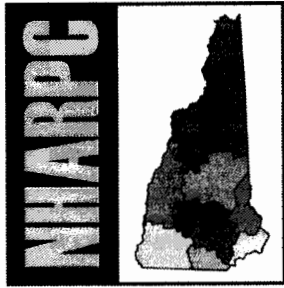
We are disappointed that the House Municipal and County Government Committee found the bill inexpedient to legislate, but we note that this action was on a close vote and was accompanied by a minority report for ought to pass. We hope we have effectively made a case for the merits of HB 1180 for assisting municipalities in maintaining economic competitiveness and quality of life.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment. Please contact me if you have questions about our position.

Sincerely,



Glenn Coppelman  
Chairman



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