



## SOUTHWEST COLORADO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

5 March, 2018

Representative Jeni James Arndt  
The House Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources Committee Chair  
200 E. Colfax  
Room HCR 0107  
Denver, CO 80203

RE: SB18-002 - Concerning the Financing of Broadband Deployment

Dear Representative Arndt,

The Southwest Colorado Council of Governments (SWCCOG) would like to express its opposition of SB18-002, Concerning the Financing of Broadband Deployment. The southwest Colorado region consists of the counties of Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma and San Juan, including the municipalities of Town of Bayfield, City of Cortez, Town of Dolores, Town of Dove Creek, City of Durango, Town of Ignacio, Town of Mancos, Town of Pagosa Springs, Town of Rico, and Town of Silverton, as well as the two Native American Tribes of the Southern Ute and the Ute Mountain Ute. The region spans roughly 6500 square miles, with less than 101,000 people; roughly 15 people per square mile. Additionally, the counties of Dolores and San Juan are considered "frontier" or less than two people per square mile. Aside from low population density, we have large distances between communities and significant topographic challenges – mountains and canyons – to contend with for broadband deployment. The Broadband High Cost Mechanism (BBHCM) is vital for broadband development in very rural areas, such as southwest Colorado. In fact, BBHCM grants have supported local internet service providers to develop broadband in hard to serve areas across the region.

Initially, SB18-002 had strong support from the SWCCOG member jurisdictions. Moving additional funding from the telephony High Cost Fund to the BBHCM would help deploy much needed funding to the very hard to serve areas across the state. However, the amendments in the Senate eroded the support for this legislation by creating obstacles that would make deployment of funding nearly impossible. While we applaud the House for the amendments that help roll some of the obviously egregious Senate amendments back, none of the House amendments address language regarding overbuilding, prohibition Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) funding, and the composition of the Broadband Board.

While the four amendments in the House version solve many of the challenges with the legislation the SWCCOG cannot support SB18-002, with the three clauses, mentioned above, remaining. Not only do they set dangerous definitions, prohibit many public private partnerships, and weigh the Broadband Board to industry's favor, they ultimately make getting the funding to the rural and hard to serve areas, more challenging. As a result, this undercuts the entire premise of the legislation that created the Broadband

High Cost Mechanism and will potentially inhibit the benefits of the BBHCM grant funding from reaching many communities in Colorado.

We urge you to consider the needs of rural Colorado, as the good in this legislation does not outweigh the negatives, and oppose SB18-002 in the current form.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Miriam C. Gillow-Wiles', written in a cursive style.

Miriam C. Gillow-Wiles  
Executive Director  
Southwest Colorado Council of Governments  
970-779-4592  
[director@swccog.org](mailto:director@swccog.org)

cc: The House Agriculture, Livestock, and Natural Resources Committee  
Senator Don Coram  
Representative KC Becker  
Representative Crisanta Duran  
Representative Marc Catlin  
Representative Barbara McLachlan