



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel G. Stec

## Senator Stec and colleagues urge approval of broadband study bill

DANIEL G. STEC January 21, 2021

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Senator Dan Stec and Assembly members Robert Smullen, Carrie Woerner, Billy Jones and Matt Simpson have sent a letter asking Governor Andrew Cuomo to sign legislation that would direct the Public Service Commission (PSC) to conduct a comprehensive study to determine exactly where access to high-speed broadband is lacking in New York State.

The Comprehensive Broadband Connectivity Act (A6679/S8805) passed the State Assembly and Senate in July with near unanimous support. If signed, the law would require the PSC to study the availability, affordability, and reliability of high-speed internet and broadband

access in New York State, and produce a detailed access map on its website indicating internet service by location. At least four public hearings to engage the public and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) would also be required.

The legislation was delivered to the governor on December 29. He has up to 30 days to act on the legislation.

Senator Stec said, "The State of New York promised four years ago universal access to high-speed broadband for everyone but still hasn't fully delivered. We've seen throughout the COVID crisis that school children, professionals working from home and seniors trying to schedule a vaccine appointment, among many others, are at a severe disadvantage without high-speed broadband. We need accurate data and a complete picture of the problem so we can then smartly allocate resources and work in partnership with broadband providers to fix it."

Assemblyman Robert J. Smullen said, "Broadband for rural upstate is like the post office in the 1800's, and like rural electrification in the 1930's. We cannot let our people fall on the wrong side of the digital divide, especially our children. Broadband is the key commodity for rural equity in the 21st century. "

Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner said, "Broadband is a utility that is just as critical in the 21st century as electrification was in the 20th century. It is critical that we ensure that each household in NYS has access to broadband service with sufficient capacity and availability to meet the needs today's families and businesses. Having accurate and complete data on the availability of adequate broadband will enable us to plan for and implement a true statewide broadband network that reaches every home and business."

Assemblyman Billy Jones said, "While the governor announced his universal broadband initiative in 2015, North Country families know that that promise remains unfulfilled," said

Jones. "The shift to remote work and school has made high-speed broadband even more critical for our residents and small businesses, and we must do everything we can to ensure fair and equitable access to reliable internet service. As the Governor is pushing for affordability, this legislation allows us to study the accessibility of high-speed broadband statewide, which is the most important step in righting this wrong. I urge the governor to sign this important bill into law as soon as possible."

Assemblyman Matt Simpson said, "Now is the time for the State of New York to fulfill its promise to bring reliable broadband coverage to the residents of the North Country and beyond. The urgency for broadband connectivity in the age of COVID-19 has exposed the absolute necessity for residents to have modern technology in order to live and succeed in a modern society. Whether it be remote learning for our children, the new work-from-home norms of the business place, or ensuring the public health and safety of our seniors; access to reliable quality broadband has become an essential part of our every day lives. We cannot let any more New Yorkers fall behind."