

## **POSITION STATEMENT**

### **Telecommunications, Cable and Broadband**

*The North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce is a business advocacy, economic development organization working to create and sustain relationships among businesses and between businesses and the community. With a diverse membership base of nearly 1000 member firms, employing over 25,000 people in the region, the Chamber is working to foster economic opportunity in Fitchburg, Leominster, and surrounding communities. This policy position is intended to serve as guidelines for the Chamber's Government Affairs efforts and has been reviewed and approved by the Chamber's Government Affairs Committee and Board of Directors.*

Adopted: January 21, 2016

Electronic communication infrastructure is more important in the business environment than ever before. Businesses of all kinds rely on affordable, reliable, and efficient mediums to support technologies that leverage electronic communications. Local, state and federal governments should partner with businesses and communities to increase access to the highest quality of broadband access. Communities that lack cable, fiber or high speed services are put at a competitive disadvantage that can slow growth. With an inability to keep up with emerging technologies, expansion into the high tech industries becomes disproportionately concentrated.

Access to high speed internet is crucial to remain a competitive environment that can recruit and retain businesses to Massachusetts. The North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce recommends the following measures to address lacking broadband infrastructure in Massachusetts:

- State administrative and regulatory agencies should encourage greater competition and access to broadband providers in Massachusetts. Access to reliable and high speed services should be an equitable process that fosters choice and the ability to shop around;
- Ensure the region's educational facilities have internet and electronic communication parity with other parts of the Commonwealth so that students have a comfortable understanding and competitive edge when it comes to electronic communication;
- Local governments, in conjunction with community and business organizations, should identify areas where there is a lack of service or need for a higher caliber of service, this process should include identifying priority areas and the development of action plans;
- When evaluating economic development projects, broadband and cable infrastructure adequacy should be a priority and an eligible project in the MassWorks grants funding for infrastructure improvement;

- In areas that are lacking high speed infrastructure, allow for less stringent competition and unlock potential service providers that may be able to provide services that are lacking;
- Internet service providers should continue to grow their service offerings outside of the 128/95 belt and into the central and western part of the state – projects in the central and western part of the state should be incentivized and offered streamlined permitting and lesser regulatory restrictions;

Commitment to broadband accessibility is a commitment to economic development. In order to be a competitive environment for all types of businesses, the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce will advocate on behalf of its members to increase accessibility and affordability. Broadband expansion requires innovative partnerships between government and the business community and the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce will always provide leadership to broker those relationships.

*While this statement is policy as of the effective date of this document, the Chamber reserves the right to adopt changes and make modifications and additions to its policies, and will continue to monitor issues as they develop. Please contact Patrick Lawlor, Public Affairs Manager at (978) 353-7600 with any questions regarding this policy position.*