May 25, 2020

House Consumer Affairs Committee

Re: PSBA Supports HB 2438 & HB 2348

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the 4,500 elected officials who govern the Commonwealth’s public school districts, **we are writing to request your support of House Bill 2438 and House Bill 2348**, which are scheduled to be considered by the House Consumer Affairs Committee on Tuesday, May 26th.

**House Bill 2438 (Rep. Owlett)** would establish the “Unserved High-Speed Broadband Funding Program”, a competitive grant program administered by the Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA). The program would provide financial assistance to private vendors for projects that support the proliferation and availability of high-speed broadband service to unserved areas, particularly rural areas, in Pennsylvania.

**House Bill 2348 (Rep. Causer)** would allow electric cooperatives to use their existing poles to deploy fiber lines for broadband. Currently, some easements held by electric cooperatives do not specifically permit them to attach fiber lines to those poles to provide broadband, even though their members want this service. The bill would clarify that if a cooperative intends to add fiber lines to their existing infrastructure they cannot not change the physical use of the easement, interfere with or impair any vested rights of the property owner subject to the easement, or place an additional burden on the property or interests of the owner.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the extreme connectivity disparities that hamper efforts to provide continuity of education across the Commonwealth. Legislation with the potential to enhance connectivity in Pennsylvania, like House Bills 2438 and 2348, would help provide school districts and students with the tools to succeed in a modern educational environment.

Thank you Representative Causer and Representative Owlett for your leadership on this issue and appreciate your efforts to close the digital divide facing our Commonwealth.

I appreciate your time and attention to this matter. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.