

May 12, 2021

ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 850
(Fourth Reprint)

To the General Assembly:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I herewith return Assembly Bill No. 850 (Fourth Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration.

This bill establishes the Community Broadband Study Commission ("Commission"). The Commission will evaluate broadband access in New Jersey and assess impediments to access, including physical access, deployment, and affordability. The Commission will particularly focus on community networks and will evaluate the effectiveness of various models of organizing, financing, and setting up such networks. The Commission will present its findings to me and the Legislature no less than one year after its first meeting.

The Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has highlighted the importance of reliable highspeed internet access, as more people than ever rely on the internet to work, attend school, obtain medical care, stay in touch with loved ones, and conduct countless other critical tasks of daily life. Ensuring that all New Jersey residents have reliable and affordable internet access is therefore a matter of equity. I stand with the sponsors in their concern for this issue, and commend them for establishing this Commission, which will play an important role in helping us better understand the barriers and possible solutions to internet access in underserved communities. In order to strengthen the Commission and enable it to effectively fulfill its role, I am placing the Commission fully within the Board of Public Utilities, whose expertise in matters related to telecommunication and public utilities will be an asset to the Commission. I am also recommending changes to appropriately modify the roles of the

different branches in the appointment process. My recommended changes also supplement the membership of the Commission with representatives from additional State entities, including the Economic Development Authority, the Department of Education, and the Department of Community Affairs, to ensure that the Commission has the benefit of additional relevant Executive Branch expertise and perspectives in carrying out its mission.

Therefore, I herewith return Assembly Bill No. 850 (Fourth Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

- Page 2, Section 1, Line 7: After "established" insert "in the Board of Public Utilities"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 9: Delete "13" and insert "19"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 18: After "designee;" insert "(5) the Chief Executive Officer of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, ex officio, or the officer's designee; (6) the Commissioner of the Department of Education, ex officio, or the commissioner's designee; (7) the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs, ex officio, or the commissioner's designee; (8) three public members to be appointed by the Governor, who shall have expertise in community broadband networks and infrastructure"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 19: Delete "(5)" and insert "(9)"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 20: After "by the" insert "Governor, upon the recommendation of the"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 22: Delete "(6)" and insert "(10)"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 23: After "by the" insert "Governor, upon the recommendation of the"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 25: Delete "(7)" and insert "(11)"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 25: After "by" insert "the Governor, upon recommendation by"
- Page 2, Section 1, Line 32: Delete "(8)" and insert "(12)"

Page 2, Section 1, Line 32:

After "by" insert "the
Governor, upon recommendation
by"

Page 2, Section 1, Line 40:

Delete "(9)" and insert "(13)"

Page 2, Section 1, Line 41:

After "the" insert "Governor,
upon the recommendation of
the"

[seal]

Respectfully,

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Parimal Garg

Chief Counsel to the Governor