

January 18, 2019

TO: Honorable Members of Virginia's General Assembly
FROM: Louisa County Broadband Authority



The Louisa County Broadband Authority requests that you reject HB #2108 (Byron) and any future legislation that threatens the rights, authorities, and privileges granted to local government through the Virginia Wireless Services Act of 2003.

Louisa County faces a critical problem with Internet service, one which is not a matter of simple affordability, but rather one of availability – large swaths of our largely rural County have no provider capable or willing to deliver broadband service to our residents. This impacts us in critical ways – our children are disadvantaged educationally without access to the Internet, our populace lacks access to medical information and treatment options, and a central convenience of 21st century-life is simply unavailable to much of our citizenry. Opportunities that urban residents take for granted – the ability to look at Wikipedia for a school project, the chance to learn more on WebMD about a cancer treatment being recommended by a doctor, or even the joy of connecting with friends and family over Facebook – are closed to our citizens because they live in a rural county. For some, this is a choice; for others, like our children and poor, there is no choice.

Louisa County formed a Broadband Authority to improve access to broadband for our entire population. This body already faces an uphill battle – rural counties like Louisa lack the resources to implement this service directly ourselves, and commercial providers lack the profit incentive to do so. House Bill 2108 takes a nearly impossible task and adds unnecessary additional burdens on rural Authorities. We strongly oppose this legislative effort, whose various operating requirements guarantee that our citizens and their children will continue to be unable to gain broadband access in large parts of our County.

Sincerely,
Bernard Hill
Vice-Chair, Louisa County Broadband Authority