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U.S House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Dear Representative:

The Coalition for Local Internet Choice has heard that Rep. Marsha Blackburn is planning to propose an amendment to House Appropriation bill HR 5016. The amendment would preclude the Federal Communications Commission from using its appropriated funds to take any action that would preempt a State law governing whether or to what extent the State or a municipality or other political sub-division of the State may provide broadband Internet access service. The Coalition urges you to oppose any such amendment.

As Congress and the Commission have often recognized, ensuring that all Americans have reasonable and timely access to advanced telecommunications capabilities, particularly in rural and other high-cost areas, is “the great infrastructure challenge of our time.” Toward this end, Congress has assigned the Commission a central role in defining the relevant terms and standards and in identifying and removing barriers to broadband investment and competition. While preemption of State barriers to broadband investment and competition should be used rarely, in only the clearest of cases, it should not be ruled out categorically in all cases, as the Blackburn amendment would do.

Our Coalition was established to support local choice in acquiring advanced communications capabilities. Our members believe that communities should be free to decide to work with willing incumbents, enter into public-private partnerships, develop their own networks, if necessary, or do whatever else may work for their citizens, businesses, and institutions. Where communities have been free to do this, we have seen robust economic development, enhanced educational and occupational opportunity, access to more affordable modern health care, improved public safety, greater energy efficiency and environmental protection, and much more that has contributed to a high quality of life. In contrast, where state barriers to community broadband initiatives and public-private partnerships exist, both the public and private sectors, particularly high-technology companies, are failing to meet their potential.

Leadership:

Jim Baller, President | Jim@LocalNetChoice.org

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At this critical time in our country's history, we should not preclude or inhibit any potentially successful strategy that will enable our communities and America as a whole to thrive in the emerging knowledge-based global economy. Nor can we afford to take off the table any approach that may be necessary in certain cases to remove barriers to broadband investment and competition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne S. Hovis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Joanne Hovis
Chief Executive Officer, CLIC

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