THE DISABILITY NETWORK
INDEPENDENCE BEYOND DISABILITY

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State Representative Ken Horn
State Representative Roy Schmidt
State Senator Mike Nofs
State Senator Hoon-Yung Hopgood

Dear Legislative Leaders:

The Disability Network is a 15 year old center for independent living, offering many programs and supports for people with disabilities, including training in technology. It is our mission to change attitudes, policies and promote freedom, choice, and equality for all people, including those with disabilities.

We are writing to urge you to modernize the Michigan Telecommunications Act (MTA).

Access to affordable broadband is critical for people with disabilities to live independently, participate in society and to seek out the same opportunities available to others. In the past decade, this access has had a profound change in how persons with disabilities live their lives. Broadband enables low-cost remote sign language interpreters for people who are deaf to communicate with doctors at medical appointments, allows participation in online education programs for people with mobility disabilities and creates opportunities for people with disabilities to work from home. Access to broadband is critical and empowering for the 1.9 million (US Census) citizens with disabilities in Michigan.

Current regulations force telecommunications companies to divert investment dollars in order to comply with out-dated regulations, using resources that could otherwise be used to benefit Michigan customers who rely on broadband and other telecommunications services. It is time for that to change.

We believe the state should adopt policies that will encourage additional investment in broadband and make it more accessible to ensure that people with disabilities are able to fully participate in society.

What's more, where regulatory modernization has taken place – including here in Michigan – increased choice, competition, investment and innovation have followed, benefiting all citizens.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Mike Zelley, President
The Disability Network