



*State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor*

*Roy Cooper
Governor*

May 17, 2019

*20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, N. C. 27699-0301*

Mr. Sonny Perdue, Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: USDA ReConnect Grant-Rural Broadband
Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation

Dear Secretary Perdue:

This letter is to offer my unconditional support to the Application filed by Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation (ATMC) for a grant to provide rural broadband service. ATMC provides telecommunications services, including broadband service, in parts of two rural counties in southeastern North Carolina. This specific grant would enable ATMC to provide broadband service to rural portions of Columbus County, a county that has been designated a Persistent Poverty County in North Carolina. The proposal would provide high speed Internet access with speeds of up to one gigabyte delivered over a 100% fiber optic network to approximately 2500 homes and businesses, as well as provide access to a variety of critical community anchor institutions. The plan would also increase economic opportunity and facilitate agricultural production and marketing.

North Carolina has a dedicated Broadband Infrastructure Office within N.C. Department of Information Technology, which administers the State Broadband Plan that can be accessed at www.ncbroadband.gov. In 2018, North Carolina enacted the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology Act (GREAT Act), which provides matching state grants to encourage rural broadband deployment. North Carolina law also permits public utilities in North Carolina to provide broadband services, and a bill is currently before the General Assembly that would authorize Electric Membership Corporations to seek federal grants to deploy broadband infrastructure. In 2018, the General Assembly established an expedited process for small cell site permitting, the Department of Transportation, which manages 80 percent of the rights-of-ways along our roadways has

Secretary Sonny Perdue
May 17, 2019
Page 2

established an online permitting approval process to expedite utility construction, and further streamlining of the permitting processes will be considered during the current session.

Broadband is essential to a high quality of life and economic opportunity for rural communities. We appreciate the commitment of the USDA to this effort and I pledge the continuing support of my administration to a similar effort at the State level.

With kind regards, I am

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roy Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" and "C".

Roy Cooper

RAC/sm