



From the desk of David Gutowsky, President

June 24, 2020

The Board of Directors of Internet Freedom for McHenry County
224 W Judd St, Ste 8
Woodstock, Illinois 60098-3199

The Honorable Congresswoman Lauren Underwood
666 Russel Ct Ste 309
Woodstock, Illinois 60098

Honorable Representative Underwood,

We were delighted to see your recent virtual roundtable with the FCC, and your interest in collecting data related to broadband. Your continued efforts in improving rural broadband in Northern Illinois communities is greatly appreciated—thank you. It is our hope that with your efforts, we can see an improvement with bringing competitive high-quality cost-effective fiber-optic broadband to everyone in Northern Illinois and more.

Since our sit-down meeting last August, we launched our highly-prepared, professional and industry-quality survey on broadband in McHenry County. Our Broadband Survey was developed and reviewed by a team including industry experts, a web user interface and survey developer, marketing experts, government elected officials and administrators, and an attorney. The Broadband Survey is comprehensive in nature covering organizations and residential; location details like address and rural vs urban; the need for improved landline telephone, cellular, Internet, cable TV, or satellite service; the expressed importance level of Internet; current Internet Service Provider; type of broadband; cost of broadband; the download and upload speed; number of people in the household and the age breakdown; demographics; the willingness to use property taxes to fund the fiber-optic infrastructure; and the demand for fiber-optics. To date, we have obtained over 400 responses from households and organizations throughout McHenry County, and the overwhelming consensus is: your constituents are experiencing high costs; lack of competition; hidden fees; and inconsistent and inadequate quality of service. This problem cannot be fixed with the current FCC bare minimum definition of “broadband” and these negative experiences are coming from rural and urban Internet users alike.

In August 2019, we shared the [IFMC Policy Brief on LIFT Act](#) (H.R. 2741) with your office, we suggested changes to H.R. 2741, and/or any other bill, recognizing fiber-optics as the only and best one-time cost-effective investment that will lead to competitive high-quality cost-effective universal access to all homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions. To continue the focus on the inadequate technology, we will continue to waste and spend taxpayer monies on antiquated technology from for-profit companies that have no intention of providing competitive high-quality cost-effective universal access to everyone, as they have for decades. Experts agree symmetrical gigabit service through fiber-optics is a multi-generational solution to current and future Internet needs.

In February 2020, the State of Illinois released their [Connect Illinois Broadband Strategic Plan](#), which has taken on several ambitious goals to be completed by 2028. It is in our opinion, the only technology that will achieve and surpass these goals is by investing in a fiber-optic infrastructure to all homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions within our communities. What better way than to align the legislature structure at both a federal and state level by making symmetrical gigabit the minimum standard of “broadband”? With implementing the recommendations from the Policy Brief, these goals can be achieved far easier and effectively.

Recently, IFMC has applied for the Illinois Connected Communities grant to seek funding for increasing our educate and build support activities around obtaining more Broadband Survey results. We are proud to say that we were able to secure nine letters of support from governmental and quasi-governmental organizations in less than two weeks—our allies and supporters already have heard our message and know community-owned fiber-optics is what we need. We hope your office will help us identify funding opportunities at the Federal level.

We also strongly suggest you take advantage of the superior work product of our Broadband Survey, by linking it on your website and/or distributing the link (<https://survey.ifmc.co>) to others in McHenry County. Our Broadband Survey identifies areas of McHenry County that are unserved or underserved by broadband Internet service, and to generally identify demands for fiber-optic broadband Internet service. Our survey is comprehensive, and honestly, your staff would



spend 100+ hours to make anything as good. We have done the work for you, please use it. If your office can help spread the Broadband Survey, we would be happy to share our data, including testimonials, with you.

We are the eyes and ears on the ground pushing this issue forward. With our combined efforts, we have no doubt that we can make significant progress. We look forward to you reaching out with us and becoming a stronger partner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Gutowsky". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Gutowsky