

ROBERT J. WITTMAN

1ST DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
RANKING MEMBER, SEAPOWERS AND PROJECTION FORCES
TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
WATER, OCEANS, AND WILDLIFE

CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL
SHIPBUILDING CAUCUS

CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL
CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED TASK FORCE

CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL
PUBLIC HEALTH CAUCUS

CO-CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL
RURAL BROADBAND CAUCUS



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 13, 2021

WASHINGTON OFFICE
2055 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4261

DISTRICT OFFICES:

STAFFORD OFFICE
95 DUNN DRIVE SUITE 201
STAFFORD, VA 22556
(540) 659-2734

MECHANICSVILLE OFFICE
6501 MECHANICSVILLE TURNPIKE SUITE 102
MECHANICSVILLE, VA 23111
(804) 730-6595

MIDDLE PENINSULA OFFICE
508 CHURCH LANE
P.O. BOX 3108
TAPPAHANNOCK, VA 22560
(804) 443-0668

WWW.WITTMAN.HOUSE.GOV

Tamarah Holmes, Ph.D.
Director, Office of Broadband
Department of Housing and Community Development
600 East Main Street, Suite 300
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Director Holmes:

I am writing in support of the Fauquier County FY 2022 Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) grant application to expand high-speed broadband availability in the First Congressional District. Approval of this application would help meet the critical need to buildout high-speed broadband service to residents of Fauquier County.

Rural residents in Virginia's First Congressional District appreciate the value of high-speed broadband access. Providing reliable broadband access is vital for commercial stability, job creation, distance learning, and telehealth service expansion. Throughout the First Congressional District of Virginia, as in other largely rural areas, economic incentives are needed to expand broadband access, and the VATI program has been a successful vehicle of meeting that need. VATI encourages private telecommunications providers to enlarge their coverage and gives localities the ability to design the expansion that is right for their communities. This eases the financial burden associated with construction costs, broadens service, and creates a successful public-private partnership (P3) for the awardees and for the Commonwealth.

The proposed VATI project with All Points Broadband, Dominion Energy, and Rappahannock Electrical Cooperative will bring service to 10,500 homes in Fauquier County. This is the equivalent of approximately half the homes in Fauquier, and providing wired access to the equivalent of every public school system student. The project scope and costs in Fauquier County is \$64 million, and while the VATI allows for up to 80% funding from the State, we are seeking \$14.7 million from the State or 23%, Local Match of \$10.5 million, and All Points is contributing a significant amount at \$38.8 million. REC in the past has presented similar opportunities, but those plans were 4-5 years out as of 2020. This project is the first opportunity presented to the County, after multiple RFP and PPEA opportunities in the last five years to effectively provide universal wired connectivity to the whole of the County. Given the size, topography, and population of the County; even fixed wireless has faced deployment and access challenges. The Board of Supervisors is committed to this project and opportunity to not only support our citizens

with telehealth, virtual learning; but also supporting opportunities for economic growth and business opportunities in our rural, agricultural areas.

Thank you for your consideration of the Fauquier County application. Moreover, if you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert J. Wittman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress