



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF IMPROVEMENT, INTEGRITY, AND
INFORMATION

Nicholas A. Toumpas
Commissioner

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The Department of Health and Human Services' Mission is to join communities and families in providing opportunities for citizens to achieve health and independence.

February 23, 2010

The Honorable Larry Strickling
Assistant Secretary of Commerce
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Assistant Secretary Strickling:

On behalf of New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) I wish to express our support of the statewide broadband proposal submitted by the University of New Hampshire to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technologies Opportunities Program (BTOP) Round 2 program. Availability of broadband services throughout New Hampshire is an essential enabler for advancing the Department's goals to improve health care quality, efficiency, safety and access to the residents of New Hampshire.

The Department has several initiatives which rely on broadband availability.

One such initiative is our State Level Health Information Exchange Planning and Implementation project which seeks to establish a Health Information Exchange capability within the state to allow hospitals, physician practices, laboratories, pharmacies and other health care providers as well as other interested parties (public health, researchers, health plans (including Medicaid), etc.) to exchange electronic health records for the treatment of patients and improving population health. The expansion of broadband services, especially in the rural and underserved areas in the northern and western regions of the state, is needed to allow entities to publish and retrieve electronic health data through the Exchange.

Other initiatives include the expansion of telemedicine in several health disciplines. The Department recently invested in implementing a video conferencing capability at the state-operated psychiatric hospital, New Hampshire Hospital (NHH), and the Bureau of Behavioral Health (BBH). NHH's use of video conferencing for patient admittance screening saves both time and money. Currently able to connect to hospital Emergency Departments to NHH physicians, NHH seeks to expand its use of video conferencing to physician homes for off-hour assessments and consultations, and thus further reducing response time and costs. BBH also uses video conferencing to train behavioral health practitioners throughout the state. Expanding broadband availability to unserved regions will increase access to and decrease the cost of training.

For these reasons, DHHS enthusiastically supports Network New Hampshire's efforts at constructing middle mile broadband across the state and is excited about the opportunities expanded broadband services will provide.

Sincerely,

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