August 25, 2009

The Honorable Lawrence E. Strickling
Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information
and Administrator
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
Herbert C. Hoover Building (HCHB)
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Strickling:

We are writing in support of the Broadband Infrastructure grant application (Broadband Technology Opportunities Program; CDFA# 11.557) submitted by the University of New Hampshire for $46,271,309 to improve broadband service and lay the foundation for economic growth and job creation across our state.

New Hampshire lacks adequate access to broadband services. Ninety percent of households access the internet by methods that do not meet broadband speed definitions. The State’s I-BEAM-NH (Infrastructure to Broaden Economic Advancement and Mindshare in New Hampshire) project will address the most critical barriers to the deployment of broadband throughout the State. The centerpiece of the proposal is the development of two middle mile and five last mile projects which will bring broadband service to nearly all areas of New Hampshire that are currently classified as unserved or underserved.

This project was designed to maximize benefit to residents, institutions and businesses across New Hampshire. More than 50,000 subscribers will be able to upgrade or gain access to affordable broadband services. Many government entities and private institutions will be connected to a statewide broadband infrastructure, including 21 hospitals and health care institutions; 22 State Police, County Sheriff, and Public Safety Access Points (PSAP) locations; 234 community and state libraries; nine higher education campuses; five public television transmitter and broadcast sites; and 17 mountain-top tower facilities. This network will improve public safety and communications, support education and health care delivery, and enhance many other services for people across the State.

This grant is an opportunity to invest in a vision long held by residents of New Hampshire and shared by the Rural Utilities Service of a 21st Century communications infrastructure that will grow the economy, create jobs, and spur development in rural communities. More than 75 percent of the proposed I-BEAM-NH service area is classified as
unserved or underserved. Many of these communities have been deeply impacted by the economic recession, and these funds will help lay a foundation for recovery.

We strongly support the University of New Hampshire's application and urge your careful consideration of this critically important project. The proposal is the product of close collaboration between broadband advocates and economic development and education leaders from across our state and we are pleased to support their efforts. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us about this application. If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Levine in Congressman Hodes office at (603) 223-9814 or Lisa.Levine@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

Congressman Paul Hodes  
Senator Judd Gregg

Senator Jeanne Shaheen  
Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter

cc:  Dr. Bernadette McGuire-Rivera, Associate Administrator, Office of Telecommunications and Information Applications  
Mr. James V. Wasilewski, Director, Office of Congressional Affairs