



Weeks Medical Center

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 Weeks Medical Center, I wish to express my support of the statewide broadband proposal titled Network New Hampshire Now (#4248) submitted by the University of New Hampshire to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technologies Opportunities Program (BTOP) Round 2 program. Weeks Medical Center is impacted by a lack of available connectivity and by the high cost of connectivity due to insufficient supply and inadequate competition in New Hampshire.

The future of healthcare for rural areas such as ours will depend largely on increasingly imaginative use of telemedicine. Telemedicine allows rural hospitals and clinics to provide top line services to patients that the hospitals and clinics cannot afford to do on their own due to the high cost. There are many examples:

Teleradiology allows immediate turnaround for interpretation of x-rays at night and on weekends and holidays by a licensed radiologist who does not have to be at the facility. This is very important for rural emergency departments who receive many patients during the "off-hours" when a resident radiologist is not available. Another example of the emerging trends in teleradiology is ePharmacy, or "virtual Pharmacy". ePharmacy is very useful in small hospitals where a Registered Pharmacist is not available on nights and weekends, yet pharmacy orders must be reviewed and approved at all hours. The electronic Pharmacy provides for a remote pharmacist to review and approve orders at all hours using the hospital's own pharmacy system, but operating from a remote location pharmacy service. As you can imagine, all of these telemedicine services require high speed, secure connectivity.

In addition, many of these projects require redundancy in addition to speed. A second path to the Internet has become a standard of practice in hospitals. Yet, in the rural areas, hospitals are lucky to have a single broadband service provider. Another important factor is the ability to have point-to-point connections for super-critical telemedicine projects such as "virtual intensive care", or eICU. In the case of eICU, highly trained specialists at remote locations can monitor telemetry data, images, and sounds for the most critically ill patients, all in real time. These systems generally require very high speed connections that are not subject to the vagaries of the Internet. They require guaranteed bandwidth, point-to-point connections.

If Weeks Medical Center were to develop an eICU project, we would be able to commit \$4000 a month for a secure point-to-point 40mb connection to a major Metropolitan hospital that provided virtual ICU services. This does not constitute an offer, since it would require proper approval. But the future of providing healthcare services in remote areas lies with telemedicine, and Weeks Medical Center would develop these systems further if bandwidth availability and cost were favorable.

For these reasons, we at Weeks Medical Center enthusiastically support New Hampshire's efforts to construct the Network New Hampshire Now Project. We encourage the funding and construction of this project, and we look forward to being a customer of the finished network.

Sincerely,

Eric S. Livingstone  
Director, IS & MM  
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Lancaster, NH 03584