From: RABON III, ALBERT R
Subject: AT&T Broadband Investment
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Dear Friends,

As 2021 begins, I wanted to extend my best wishes for a happy and safe year for you, your family, and your community.

We all hope for many changes from 2020, but let me assure you that one thing most certainly will not change: AT&T's strong commitment to connecting North Carolinians through advanced broadband technologies.

AT&T invested more than $1.9 billion in our North Carolina networks from 2017-19. Our determination to invest here remains strong, driven by the positive public policy environment North Carolina leaders have worked hard to create and maintain.

You may have recently seen claims by the NC League of Municipalities that we plan to disconnect customers from the Internet by "pulling back serving a thousand households or more in the state" through DSL technology.

Those claims are factually wrong. Period.

DSL is first-generation broadband technology that customers are abandoning in favor of modern, high-speed internet services. Today's customers demand more robust high-speed internet access. As a result, we are focusing on more advanced, higher-speed technologies like fiber and next-generation wireless, to meet the needs of customers.

Every dollar invested in maintaining old technology and services, is a dollar we can't invest in newer, faster technology. That's why we're no longer accepting new orders for this outdated, basic Internet service.

Let me be clear: No current customers lost internet access as a result of this decision. We are simply not accepting new orders for this outdated product.

In areas where AT&T already has fiber optics available, we are working to upgrade current DSL customers to this newer technology. While current DSL customers are still able to continue their existing service in areas where AT&T does not have fiber, they'll eventually have the ability to upgrade to faster services too.

In the rare circumstances where more modern wired internet service is not available from us or a competitor, we are offering wireless alternatives, including AT&T Wireless Internet, a comparable wireless broadband service.

AT&T has deployed more than 3.8 million strand-miles of fiber-optic high-speed infrastructure across North Carolina. Ultra-fast internet speeds powered by AT&T Fiber are now available to more than 900,000 locations across the state, including in parts of more than 30 counties and 55 cities.

The General Assembly, through the GREAT Act, has demonstrated its commitment to addressing connectivity issues and seeking effective approaches to encourage investment and growth.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of fast, reliable communications networks. By all accounts, the broadband networks we all depend on to FaceTime with loved ones; to collaborate with teachers in the classroom; and to Zoom into office meetings, performed well under extremely heavy loads.

That's no accident. Decades of bi-partisan government policies promoted the private-sector investment that produced this result. It's no coincidence that the U.S. led the world in 4G. And we're now seeing a repeat performance for 5G, with 5G networks from 3 national carriers already live. The benefits of all this investment and innovation are striking. Compared to 2015, industry broadband speeds are up 16% while costs are down 20%.

Policy makers weren't planning for the coronavirus when they implemented a light regulatory touch on broadband infrastructure, but good policy produces good results in unpredictable circumstances.

While availability to reliable, high-speed internet is often the topic of discussion around broadband, adoption remains a substantial issue and is a significant contributor to the digital divide.

In North Carolina over 93% of our citizens have access to broadband service as defined by the FCC with download speeds of at least 25 Mbps and upload speeds of 3 Mbps, yet—according to the FCC—only 59.4% of North Carolinians subscribe to broadband service of at least 25/3 and 25% of North Carolinians don't subscribe to any broadband service.

I am proud of the work that has been done for decades by AT&T employees. Their efforts have been key to keeping us connected during the pandemic.

We are committed to keeping communities connected and stand ready to work with you in finding solutions which work for North Carolina.

Sincerely,

Trey

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