



July 2, 2007

Dear Governor Easley, Chairman Luebke, and Members of the House Finance Committee:

The President, the Congress, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) have all identified as a national priority universal, affordable access to broadband technology. The President had set a goal of 2007 for universal access in the United States, a goal which will not be met this year and cannot be met in the near future without the contributions of local community networks.

North Carolina's education leaders, with the support of Lt. Governor Beverly Perdue, have embraced this vision, most recently through N.C. State's Friday Institute for Educational Innovation. This pilot initiative to provide high-speed network connectivity to all K-12 schools in the state illustrates that North Carolina's educational institutions recognize the critical role broadband networks play in ensuring the future education of North Carolina's youth. Unfortunately, when students living in rural and distressed urban areas return home to do their homework, they are at a disadvantage with dial-up or no Internet access. HB1587 would prevent local communities from stepping in and filling this void.

For over twenty years, students attending most of North Carolina's colleges and universities have had access to a high-speed Internet network, thanks to the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN). Higher education in North Carolina has embraced online learning as a means of reaching busy, full-time working students. East Carolina University, one of the first schools in the nation to develop and offer a degree completely over the Internet, now offers more than fifty degree and certificate programs in health, education, technology, and other areas. The University of North Carolina in Greensboro highly encourages its distance education students to have broadband access in order to partake in the multimedia functions, such as video or long audio lectures, offered by its online courses. Again, many students wishing to take full advantage of these expansive online educational offerings and the benefits of NCREN are at a competitive disadvantage without access to broadband.

EDUCAUSE, a nonprofit association of over 2,000 colleges and universities, opposes any state or federal policy that would impede local government efforts from providing broadband services and the vital applications that run over the Internet to its citizens. In that spirit, we believe that HB1587 would hinder North Carolinians' affordable access to a high-speed Internet and the tools essential for collaboration, learning, and research and should not be signed into law.

Sincerely,

Mark Luker
Vice President, EDUCAUSE



Transforming Education Through Information Technologies