Governor Carney Announces $20 Million for Broadband Infrastructure

CARES Act funds accelerate progress to connect more Delaware families to high-speed internet, support remote learning and establish statewide speed survey

WILMINGTON, Del. — Governor John Carney, Chief Information Officer (CIO) James Collins, and Delaware Secretary of Education Dr. Susan Bunting announced on Monday that $20 million in CARES Act funding will be used to build out additional infrastructure across Delaware, gather strategic data through a statewide speed survey, and acquire equipment and services for families in financial need.

Additionally, fifteen towers in the current phase of the Rural Wireless Broadband Initiative in Kent and Sussex counties will be completed about four months ahead of schedule. Originally slated to be completed by the end of 2020, the project received a boost of $566,000 through the Delaware Department of Education's CARES Act funds to fast-track reaching more students in unserved and under-served areas in need of high-speed broadband for remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Combined with the initial $2 million investment in State funding, the Rural Wireless Broadband Initiative is expected to serve more than 1,500 customers in rural areas and has capacity to expand.

> *"Over the last two years, Delaware has worked to eliminate internet deserts and make high-speed internet a reality for all Delawareans," said **Governor Carney**. "Now more than ever, we know how essential reliable internet is for daily life. These funds will help us build additional broadband infrastructure, identify areas where we need to improve internet speeds, and eliminate barriers so that Delaware families can have quality internet— whether it's for remote learning, working, or connecting with family."*

"We know that access to high-speed broadband is as essential as any public utility, and the COVID-19 pandemic made that need even more evident – the day of reckoning for broadband is here," said **CIO Collins**. "We are very much encouraged by the significant progress that has been made but we have more to do. We will continue to pursue any and all avenues available to us to ensure digital equity across our entire state."

The State will also use CARES Act funds to cover equipment installation and broadband service for students from low-income households across the state for remote or hybrid learning purposes. Additional information on this program will be announced in the coming weeks.

"For our students who are starting the school year learning remotely, having access to the internet is critical to their academic growth," said **Secretary Bunting**. "We also have educators who are teaching from home right now and need reliable service. Connectivity is an immediate need with a solution that will serve them beyond the pandemic. We are grateful for DTI's efforts in helping us support both students and educators."

"These past few months, our staff was tasked with the great challenge of providing remote instruction, a concept that really transformed how we taught our students and more importantly how we could serve their needs. This task seemed almost insurmountable as we learned how many of our students and staff lived in remote areas with little internet reliability or

connectivity," said **Elyse Baerga, Supervisor of Student Services for Woodbridge School District**. "The State's commitment towards improving these conditions is critical to our students' continued success. As all school districts throughout the state plan and prepare for hybrid learning we will be relying on these resources to improve our ability to deliver instruction and services, to better serve our students. We are grateful to see how many families are already taking advantage of this amazing opportunity."

"Being able to get wireless broadband service was heaven sent," said **Amie Errickson, a Clayton resident and new Bloosurf customer**. "We did not have access to any broadband service before. In fact, we used to have to put all the kids in the car and drive to the school parking lot just to use the WIFI to get their homework done. Now they will be able to access the virtual learning they need."

To learn more about Delaware's broadband efforts, please visit www.broadband.delaware.gov.

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