

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE LABOR AND COMMERCE STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 28, 2022

1:35 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Mia Costello, Chair  
Senator Peter Micciche  
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Joshua Revak, Vice Chair  
Senator Gary Stevens

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 111(FIN)

"An Act relating to the practice of dental hygiene; relating to advanced practice permits for dental hygienists; relating to dental assistants; prohibiting unfair discrimination under group health insurance against a dental hygienist who holds an advanced practice permit; relating to medical assistance for dental hygiene services; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED SCS CSHB 111(L&C) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 234

"An Act establishing the office of broadband; creating the broadband parity adjustment fund; establishing the Statewide Broadband Advisory Board; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 111

SHORT TITLE: DENTAL HYGIENIST ADVANCED PRAC PERMIT

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) SPOHNHOLZ

02/24/21	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/24/21	(H)	L&C, FIN
03/29/21	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
03/29/21	(H)	Heard & Held
03/29/21	(H)	MINUTE(L&C)

03/31/21	(H)	L&C AT 3:15 PM BARNES 124
03/31/21	(H)	Moved CSHB 111(L&C) Out of Committee
03/31/21	(H)	MINUTE(L&C)
04/05/21	(H)	L&C RPT CS(L&C) 7DP
04/05/21	(H)	DP: KAUFMAN, SCHRAGE, MCCARTY, NELSON, SNYDER, FIELDS, SPOHNHOLZ
05/11/21	(H)	FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519
05/11/21	(H)	INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT
05/15/21	(H)	FIN AT 10:00 AM ADAMS 519
05/15/21	(H)	Heard & Held
05/15/21	(H)	MINUTE(FIN)
05/19/21	(H)	FIN AT 1:30 PM ADAMS 519
05/19/21	(H)	<Bill Hearing Canceled>
02/02/22	(H)	FIN AT 9:00 AM ADAMS 519
02/02/22	(H)	Moved CSHB 111(FIN) Out of Committee
02/02/22	(H)	MINUTE(FIN)
02/04/22	(H)	FIN RPT CS(FIN) 6DP 1NR
02/04/22	(H)	DP: ORTIZ, EDGMON, THOMPSON, WOOL, JOSEPHSON, FOSTER
02/04/22	(H)	NR: MERRICK
02/17/22	(H)	TRANSMITTED TO (S)
02/17/22	(H)	VERSION: CSHB 111(FIN)
02/22/22	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/22/22	(S)	L&C, FIN
03/21/22	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/21/22	(S)	Heard & Held
03/21/22	(S)	MINUTE(L&C)
03/28/22	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 234

SHORT TITLE: BROADBAND: OFFICE, GRANTS, PARITY  
SPONSOR(s): LABOR & COMMERCE

03/16/22	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/16/22	(S)	L&C, FIN
03/23/22	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/23/22	(S)	Scheduled but Not Heard
03/28/22	(S)	L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

**WITNESS REGISTER**

KATIE MCCALL, Staff  
Senator Mia Costello  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented the changes in the Senate Committee Substitute (SCS), version G, for HB 111.

CHELSEA WARD-WALLER, Staff  
Representative Ivy Spohnholz  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Stated that the sponsor supports the changes in the SCS for HB 111.

KATIE MCCALL, Staff  
Senator Mia Costello  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced SB 234 on behalf of the committee.

CHRISTINE O'CONNOR, Executive Director  
Alaska Telecom Association (ATA)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided invited testimony in support of SB 234.

MARK SPRINGER, Consultant  
Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Tribal Broadband Consortium  
Bethel, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 234.

HAROLD JOHNSTON, President and Founder  
Alaska Tribal Broadband  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Voiced concerns about SB 234.

SHAWN WILLIAMS, Vice President  
Government Affairs and Strategy  
Pacific Dataport Inc.  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 234.

LESIL MCGUIRE, Consultant  
OneWeb  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 234.

BRITTANY WOODS-ORRISON, Native Movement  
Alaska Public Interest Research Group (AkPIRG)  
Rampart, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during the hearing on SB 234 to highlight the problems and high cost of internet service in rural Alaska.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[1:35:23 PM](#)

**CHAIR MIA COSTELLO** called the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Gray-Jackson, Micciche, and Chair Costello.

#### **HB 111-DENTAL HYGIENIST ADVANCED PRAC PERMIT**

[1:35:55 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO announced the consideration of CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 111(FIN) "An Act relating to the practice of dental hygiene; relating to advanced practice permits for dental hygienists; relating to dental assistants; prohibiting unfair discrimination under group health insurance against a dental hygienist who holds an advanced practice permit; relating to medical assistance for dental hygiene services; and providing for an effective date."

CHAIR COSTELLO noted that this was the second hearing and there was a Senate Committee Substitute (SCS) for the committee to consider.

[1:36:24 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE moved to adopt the work draft Senate Committee Substitute (SCS) for HB 111, work order 32-LS0480\G, as the working document.

[1:36:42 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO objected for an explanation of the changes.

[1:36:51 PM](#)

KATIE MCCALL, Staff, Senator Mia Costello, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, explained that the changes from version I to version G for HB 111 are as follows:

Page 6, line 18 the term "and Social Services" is removed to reflect the recent split of the Department of Health and Social Services into two separate departments.

[1:37:24 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO removed her objection. Finding no further objection, she stated that version G was adopted. She asked the sponsor's staff if she would like to comment before the committee took action on the bill.

[1:37:36 PM](#)

CHELSEA WARD-WALLER, Staff, Representative Ivy Spohnholz, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, stated that the sponsor supports the changes in the SCS for HB 111. She noted that version G also changes the effective date for the regulations to be after July 1, 2022, which is the effective date for the split.

[1:38:14 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE moved to report the SCS for CSHB 111, work order 32-LS0480\G, from committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s).

[1:38:32 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO found no objection and SCS CSHB 111(L&C) was reported from the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee.

[1:38:38 PM](#)

At ease

**SB 234-BROADBAND: OFFICE, GRANTS, PARITY**

[1:42:09 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO reconvened the meeting and announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 234 "An Act establishing the office of broadband; creating the broadband parity adjustment fund; establishing the Statewide Broadband Advisory Board; and providing for an effective date."

She noted that this was the first hearing and the intent was to hear the introduction followed by invited and public testimony.

[1:42:40 PM](#)

KATIE MCCALL, Staff, Senator Mia Costello, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, introduced SB 234 on behalf of the committee, paraphrasing the sponsor statement that read as follows:

Senate Bill 234 establishes important guidelines for Alaska to qualify for nearly two billion dollars of broadband funds, while creating parity between urban and rural Alaska customers in a manner that allows for

high speed, reliable internet services to be provided at an affordable rate.

In May 2021, Governor Dunleavy issued Administrative Order No. 322, to create a Task Force on Broadband to develop policy objectives and steps necessary to prepare Alaska for a large influx of money designed to move the state into the 21st century by significantly increasing and improving our broadband infrastructure.

SB 234 seeks to codify the task force recommendations through the creation of the Office of Broadband in the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED), which will prioritize broadband service expansion in the following order of priority: unserved areas, underserved areas, and anchor institutions. The duties will include:

- Expand broadband access and digital equity in the state through federal and local partnerships
- Focus on broadband infrastructure projects that meet certain speed, latency, reliability, and scalability requirements, while maintaining neutrality within those requirements
- Develop a procedure for adoption of broadband service maps
- Identify scalable and sustainable technologies that meet the needs of state residents into the future
- Support broadband equity and affordability for all state residents
- Develop a procedure for the issuance of grants
- Review and consider recommendations of the Statewide Broadband Advisory Board (SBAB)

SB 234 also establishes the Broadband Parity Adjustment Fund (BPAF), which is a separate fund in the Alaska treasury. The BPAF is created with the express purpose of offsetting consumer costs and making grants to eligible beneficiaries to improve the performance and access to services where, in many instances, it does not currently exist.

Lastly, SB 234 creates the Statewide Broadband Advisory Board to provide informed recommendations on broadband policy goals and objectives. The board will

act in an advisory capacity to the Broadband Office to identify project proposals and develop criteria for mapping and data collection, while striving to fulfill the long list of recommendations that emerged from the extensive work of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband.

[1:45:37 PM](#)

MS. MCCALL presented the sectional analysis for SB 234 that read as follows:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Section 1 on Page 1, Line 5 - AS 44.33**

Creates a new section, AS 44.33.910, to establish the Office of Broadband in the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED) and details the Office of Broadband's purpose, powers, and duties, to include:

- Expand broadband access and digital equity in the state through federal and local partnerships, while maintaining technological neutrality, with prioritization of service expansion in the following order: unserved areas, underserved areas, and anchor institutions.
- Develop a procedure for adoption of broadband service maps that incorporates the forthcoming Federal Communications Commission (FCC) maps in accordance with the Federal Broadband DATA Act, and a process to challenge the accuracy of broadband service maps used to determine availability and adequacy of service.
- Streamline permitting processes and encourage development of in-state workforce to facilitate expeditious and sustainable infrastructure deployment.
- Establish a grant program and broadband parity adjustments.

**Page 3, Line 12 - AS 44.33.915**

- Establishes the Broadband Parity Adjustment Fund (BPAF)

- The BPAF is a separate fund in the treasury which allows for grants to offset the costs of broadband services for eligible consumers.
- Funds can come from money appropriated by the legislature, federal funds, and interest earned on the fund balance.

[1:47:20 PM](#)

**Page 4, Line 5 - AS 44.33.920**

- Establishes the Statewide Broadband Advisory Board.
- The purpose of the Board is to provide input, recommendations, and advice regarding state broadband policy, goals, and objectives, as well as project selection, mapping and data collection, and progress made on the recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on Broadband.
- Composed of eleven members: the commissioners from DCCED and the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED), and nine members appointed by the governor representing:
  - ~ local government
  - ~ An Alaska Native Corporation
  - ~ A tribal government
  - ~ A school district
  - ~ The University of Alaska
  - ~ The health care community
  - ~ The broadband industry
  - ~ A broadband consumer

**Section 2 on Page 5, Line 2**

This Act sunsets on June 30, 2030

**Section 3 on Page 5, Line 3**

Establishes an immediate effective date under AS 01.10.070(c)

[1:48:46 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO turned to the invited testimony.

[1:49:07 PM](#)

CHRISTINE O'CONNOR, Executive Director, Alaska Telecom Association (ATA), Anchorage, Alaska, stated that SB 234 will provide the structure to take advantage of this once in a generation opportunity to use Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding to extend broadband into an unexpected number of places in Alaska.

CHAIR COSTELLO asked if she was a member of the governor's taskforce and testifying in that capacity or for Alaska Telecom Association.

MS. O'CONNOR replied she was testifying as the Executive Director of ATA. The Governor's Taskforce on Broadband completed its work on November 1, 2021, but while it was operational she was a member and served as the chair of the technical subgroup for the task force.

MS. O'CONNOR restated that SB 234 puts the tools in place so that Alaska's Office of Broadband can administer Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds and coordinate across programs and federal agencies to create a plan to deploy broadband throughout the state, as required by the infrastructure bill. On behalf of ATA, she stated support for SB 234. She added that she supports the legislation personally because she grew up in rural Alaska and has experience with how transformative it is to have access to robust broadband.

[1:51:58 PM](#)

SENATOR MICCICHE pointed out that the Broadband Parity Adjustment Fund is not a dedicated fund so the legislature may appropriate money into or out of that fund at will. He asked Ms. O'Conner to comment.

[1:52:50 PM](#)

MS. O'CONNOR said she can only speak to what the infrastructure bill requires. That is that each state will receive a specific amount of IIJA funds that must be used according to rules that the National Telecommunications and Information Agency (NTIA) will announce in mid-May 2022.

SENATOR MICCICHE said he mentioned this as a reminder that dedicated funding is not constitutional. The IIJA funds will come into one place, but it is available for other purposes. He noted that the Broadband Parity Adjustment Fund allows gifts, requests, and contributions from other sources so private money can be invested in this fund.

[1:54:42 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked if she was familiar with the concerns that Pacific Dataport might have with the bill.

MS. O'CONNOR replied that she was aware that they expressed concern with the language in the companion bill HB 363 that discusses latency and calls for scalability. She pointed out that those terms are used in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act so the terms are not an unknown.

[1:55:35 PM](#)

SENATOR GRAY-JACKSON asked if she had any comment on the other concerns Pacific Dataport articulated in the letter they submitted on SB 234.

MS. O'CONNOR replied she was not familiar with what those concerns were.

CHAIR COSTELLO informed the listening public that her office had not received a copy of the letter that Senator Gray-Jackson mentioned but was aware of the letter sent regarding the house version of the bill.

[1:56:30 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO asked Ms. O'Conner to point out the things in the bill that are from the federal legislation and not Alaska-specific.

MS. O'CONNOR replied that the first section [Sec. 44.33.910] that establishes the Office of Broadband and its duties parallel the infrastructure bill. She noted that the call to streamline permitting was a taskforce recommendation. She did not recall whether or not that was in the infrastructure bill, but the rest of this section definitely parallels the infrastructure bill.

She said Sec. 44.33.915 relating to the Broadband Parity Adjustment Fund is a taskforce recommendation and is something the Governor's Office has asked NTIA for the flexibility to have such a program. The language in the Infrastructure Act does allow a program like this in the equity and adoption sections of the bill.

Sec. 44.33.920 that establishes a Statewide Broadband Advisory Board is a taskforce recommendation but the Infrastructure bill also requires every state to have extensive consultation as they

develop their broadband plan, so this board will be able to help with those duties.

[1:59:12 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO asked if she had information about the size of the broadband taskforce or advisory boards that other states have.

MS. O'CONNOR replied that she would provide that information to the committee.

CHAIR COSTELLO asked her to discuss latency and how it is defined in SB 234.

MS. O'CONNOR explained that latency is in the definition of "unserved" in Section 1 on page 3, lines 5-7. It reads:

(2) "unserved area" means an area that does not have broadband speeds of at least 25 Megabits per second downstream and at least 3 Megabits per second upstream with a latency sufficient to support real-time interactive applications;

She said that means that regardless of the technology, it has to meet the standard that in other federal programs is less than 100 milliseconds. SB 234 doesn't use that definition, it just says the technology has to be capable of two-way video. The Infrastructure bill goes further; it not only uses the definitions of "unserved" and "underserved" it also requires that any projects built with IIJA funding must meet the threshold of latency sufficiency for two-way interaction.

CHAIR COSTELLO asked if it matters that the definition in the bill doesn't exactly match the federal definition.

MS. O'CONNOR replied that definition is firm in many federal programs so NTIA will likely require it. It is also required by the USDA and the FCC. She didn't believe the 100 milliseconds has to be referenced but as NTIA issues the rules she expects to see more details on latency.

[2:02:06 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO opened public testimony on SB 234.

[2:02:26 PM](#)

MARK SPRINGER, Consultant, Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Tribal Broadband Consortium, Bethel, Alaska, stated that the consortium

is an NTIA broadband grant applicant and currently is testing a low earth orbit satellite solution in the village of Akiak where last mile wireless service is provided to all households in the community. They are also testing middle mile with a terminal in the Bethel office.

He informed the committee that tribal broadband advocates and NTIA tribal applicants view this opportunity for broadband as a gift of technology that will be handed down to subsequent generations. The only corollary he can think of is the establishment of the land grant college that turned into the University of Alaska System.

MR. SPRINGER encouraged the committee to consider amending SB 234 to include the positive changes that have been made in the House companion bill, HB 363. This would include recognizing tribal partnerships, which is appropriate since the first broadband development money coming to Alaska will be through National Telecommunications and Information Administrations (NTIA) grants to the federally recognized tribes in the state. He acknowledged that some language remains in both bills that is viewed as problematic. The concern is that without specific wording or clear legislative intent, the state broad office will promulgate regulations and policies developed by the broadband advisory board that potentially will favor existing carriers and internet service providers. This would be morally and competitively unfair due to the efforts undertaken by tribes and their broadband development organizations and partners.

MR. SPRINGER stated that he continues to believe that there should be a mechanism for the chair, several members, and advisory board staff to convene and teleconference the meetings in unserved and underserved areas. This would make the public process far more inclusive and give the members and staff a taste of what service is like in many rural communities. He also expressed hope that the committee would further amend the bill to include a technical subcommittee.

MR. SPRINGER highlighted that the telephone and internet companies in the state already have maps of the unserved and underserved areas in the state. Those companies know where every millimeter of copper goes, who all their wireless data customers are, and they have post office boxes for those customers. He stressed the importance of encouraging the industry in the strongest possible terms to provide that information to the FCC for the mapping process in the hopes that mapping in Alaska can be completed before any other states.

[2:07:40 PM](#)

HAROLD JOHNSTON, President, Alaska Tribal Broadband (ATB), Anchorage, Alaska, stated that he founded ATB with the goal of improving broadband service on tribal lands. He recounted his professional credentials and opined that broadband service on tribal lands in Alaska was the worst he had ever seen. He noted that he is currently working with a 30-tribe consortium that is applying for an NTIA grant. He reported that 28 of the 30 tribes do not and will not have access to fiber for several years. They have not had access to online education throughout the pandemic and telehealth services have been beyond reach. At best, these tribes receive 10 megabits download at a cost of \$300 per month. Most tribes receive from 2 to 6 megabits download for \$215 per month. He stressed that people in urban areas would not put up with this quality of service.

MR. JOHNSTON confirmed that some of the language in SB 234 was a concern. He highlighted that his company currently was implementing tribal broadband. He said funding is available from the federal government to bring about a solution fairly quickly. His company helped to implement tribal broadband for Akiak with the 2.5 gigahertz last mile network using the first application of a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Satellite in the country, and is currently implementing broadband for the Native Village of Unalakleet. He stated, "As opposed to the kinds of broadband services available to our tribes now, we're able to deliver 25 Mbps of download at a minimum level, at a fraction of the price that's available now."

MR. JOHNSTON said he supports fiber buildout, but the tribes will not have access to that for some time and fiber will never reach some tribes. For this reason it is important to look at all the available technologies, including satellite. It should not be an either or decision because LEO satellites and others that are coming online are able to provide near term solutions.

MR. JOHNSTON stated that there are no federal rules that are specific to Alaska, and he didn't believe that the federal government fully understood the geography and environment in Alaska. He noted that the leading broadband company that just left Alaska lobbied NTIA to allow an exception for fiber because of the state's unique situation.

[2:13:10 PM](#)

SHAWN WILLIAMS, Vice President, Government Affairs and Strategy, Pacific Dataport Inc., Anchorage, Alaska, stated that he was

formerly the assistant commissioner of commerce for the state. He read the following prepared testimony.

In the last 24 months, some rural Alaska tribes have developed tribal consortiums and started launching their own broadband networks with wireless last mile and satellite middle mile. This new satellite middle mile technology is the most efficient, sustainable, scalable, and lowest cost to the customers. Our two companies, Microcom and Pacific Data Port, are helping them do this. It's kind of a broadband in a box solution for the tribes and tribal consortiums.

Let me clarify that the ATA does not represent middle mile firms like Pacific Dataport, tribes or tribal consortiums or small ISPs like Microcom. They represent fiber telecoms and they do a great job.

I would like to take this time to share two recommendations that I believe would make this bill stronger for rural Alaska, encourage competition, and encourage sound economic decisions.

We can encourage competition by removing any terms like "latency" and "scalable." These terms are subjective and not technology neutral, serving only to exclude satellites as an option. We also need to ensure that Alaska tribes and tribal consortiums and non-telecom providers have access to this funding as eligible grantees. These are the organizations that are currently deploying broadband to unserved villages in rural Alaska, and the companies they are hiring have extensive broadband experience in Alaska.

We can encourage sound economic decisions by requiring this bill develop near- and long-term strategies for deploying affordable broadband statewide using economic criteria like impact on consumer costs, timeline for deployment, breadth of coverage, sustainability without further subsidy, reliability, speed, and employing multiple technologies as required while maintaining real technology neutrality.

The bottom line: we cannot let this bill exclude the tribes and eliminate technology like [GHOS] and sometimes LEO satellite that will get them connected quickly with affordable broadband. We also cannot

continue favoring one technology that's taking forever to deploy - fiber, and usually ends up too expensive for the rural consumer. We need a fair market competition approach to broadband in rural Alaska. Let's make this part of the solution for rural Alaska and support the tribes in doing this themselves.

[2:16:07 PM](#)

MR. WILLIAMS continued his testimony:

There's one problem no one's addressing. The Alaska Broadband Taskforce in this bill prioritized there'll be more subsidized fiber networks where the consumer ends up paying high prices for slow internet. These are rural networks where people are paying \$400, \$500 per month. Do we really want to prioritize expensive, subsidized fiber projects that produce expensive and slow internet for rural Alaska? These are the facts [that] anyone who takes 10 minutes to get online [can] find out [about] what these fiber projects are producing for consumers in Alaska.

The last thing I'll add is the IIJA allows states to customize their broadband office awards and recommendations considerable to address the state's weak area - like the missing middle mile that Alaska has. The IIJA does set priorities like unserved and then underserved and the definition of "unserved" and "underserved." Those are uncontested facts.

I recently submitted written testimony with Dataport's recommended changes to SB 234. Please find a moment to review those suggestions. Pacific Dataport appreciates that the bill prioritizes the unserved and works to organize Alaska's broadband funding. We believe that it is needed; it just needs a few tweaks here and there. We encourage the spirit of competition and anything that promotes broadband expansion, efficiency, and lower prices for rural Alaskans.

[2:17:55 PM](#)

LESIL MCGUIRE, Consultant, OneWeb, Anchorage, Alaska, stated that OneWeb's first constellation of low earth satellites in polar orbit is helping to close the digital divide in Alaska. As the first LEO licensed operator, OneWeb has launched 358 of the planned 648 satellites in this initial constellation. Because those satellites are orbiting directly over Alaska, OneWeb is

ready to connect both unconnected and under-connected Alaskans. The intent is to continue to launch every seven years to ensure infrastructure integrity in the future. The company has opened an office in Alaska and is ready to continue to connect communities.

MS. MCGUIRE said an important distinction about OneWeb is that as a wholesaler it sells capacity to local Alaskan companies through distribution partnerships. She agreed with Mr. Springer that this is an unprecedented opportunity for Alaska, and relayed her belief that as the appropriating body, the legislature should steer the policy.

MS. MCGUIRE asked the committee to consider providing maximum flexibility in the bill because the IIJA regulation writing process was still underway and the definitions had not been established. She stressed the importance of technology neutrality, said middle mile should be mentioned, and suggested the Office of Broadband be encouraged to emphasize that it is the piece that allows competition to flourish and sets consumers free.

MS. MCGUIRE expressed excitement about having satellite projects up and running and able to provide high speed low latency, with minimal infrastructure in communities. She urged that the bill emphasize tech neutrality, partnering with tribes, inclusive language, and promotion of competition. Finally, she urged some level of legislative oversight throughout the process.

[2:24:24 PM](#)

BRITTANY WOODS-ORRISON, Native Movement, Alaska Public Interest Research Group (AkPIRG), Rampart, Alaska, stated that for the first time United Utilities, a GCI company, has turned Wi-Fi on in her community. The cost is \$385 and in three days three families used up their service. She noted that Rampart also owns its own FCC license as a tribal community, which should be encouraged instead of relying on telecoms as has always been the case. She stressed that unserved and underserved communities should have the power to control their own livelihood. They should be part of broadband mapping because they have knowledge of the infrastructure in their own area and know what technology options are available. If unserved and underserved communities are not involved in the process, the existing system will be reinforced, more money will be spent, and internet access will not improve. She stressed the importance of transparency, accountability, education materials, and for consumers to have the power and choice to strengthen the state. She concluded her

comments saying that the people who are closest to the problem are closest to the solution.

[2:26:15 PM](#)

CHAIR COSTELLO discerned no one else wished to testify and closed public testimony on SB 234.

CHAIR COSTELLO held SB 234 in committee for further consideration.

[2:26:35 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Costello adjourned the Senate Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meeting at 2:26 p.m.