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**STATEMENT OF DR. MARK COOPER,
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ON THE

**RELEASE BY THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OF THE NOTICE OF INQUIRY FOR THE SECTION 706 REPORT**

With the Broadband Data Improvement Act (2008) and the Broadband Technology Opportunity Programs Act (2009) Congress shifted the focus of universal service from the availability of service to adoption and utilization of broadband service. It also raised the prominence of the Section 706 Report on broadband deployment by increasing its frequency, improving its data, and locating it squarely within the new focus of universal service policy.

Combining the new focus of universal service policy with the National Broadband Plan, also mandated by Congress in 2009, the finding of the 2010 Section 706 report that broadband deployment in not “reasonable and timely” was a “no brainer.” That finding and the requirement that the FCC take immediate and aggressive action to accelerate the progress toward universal service are the driving force in U.S. telecommunications policy. Appeals Court decisions earlier this year (D.C. Circuit on the Open Internet Order; 10th Circuit on Universal Service Reform) affirm the importance of the Section 706 authority that the FCC wields.

As we approach the 20th anniversary of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which first introduced the Section 706 report, national broadband penetration levels languish in the vicinity of 70%, while the other major electronic media, like telephone service, radio and television, have achieved penetration levels well above 90%. The groups who continue to suffer a lack of broadband at home, low income, rural, high cost, consumers with disabilities, etc. were singled out by the Congress in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 for specific consideration in the setting to universal service policy. We believe the data will show that broadband deployment continues to fall far short of the goals adopted by Congress.

We applaud the FCC for launching the process of writing the seventh Section 706 report and hope it treats this report with the importance and urgency it deserves.