

Brent Graden
Director of Economic Development
City of Prestonsburg
200 North Lake Drive
Prestonsburg KY 41653
606-886-2335
606-226-9353

Federal Communications Commission

To Whom it May Concern:

It has recently come to my attention that Connected Nation, a non-profit whose goal is to help bridge the digital divide in communities across America, has recently come under attack from municipal utility broadband providers. They question the value of programs like ConnectKentucky and are trying to stop Federal support to expand their mapping process into other states.

It is my opinion that ConnectKentucky and other programs like it are an invaluable tool to help communities help themselves. Their invaluable leadership and knowledge base helps to create a public-private partnership that stimulates the local economy, promotes education, increases tourism and development, and offers increased access to broadband in underdeveloped or rural areas.

As the Director of Economic Development, it my job to find new and affordable ways to grow the local economy while not breaking the bank. Through the leadership of ConnectKentucky and local politicians, it was determined that we wanted to stimulate the local economy through technology. It was further determined that we would use a wireless internet network to accomplish this task. Meraki Networks was used to set up a wireless mesh network throughout the downtown and points of interest. After 22 weeks of initial testing, we have experienced over 3800 unique users who downloaded over 650GB of information. The reason I mention this point is that The City of Prestonsburg has experienced significant growth. In a period of 45 days after the initial announcement, we were able to attract twenty new business and create 43 new jobs. Our year-over-year general revenues increased by \$111,410. Whether directly or indirectly, I attribute our growth to hard work, recruitment, and proper infrastructure such as our wireless mesh system. When citizens have improved access to information and technology, you will see a better and healthier community than before. Our goal is progress, not profit.

Our city is not unique. As technology improves and products become faster, better, and cheaper, the common consumer will take advantage of it. Whether it is a company like Meraki Networks or current providers like AT&T, Verizon or other municipal utilities, it is up to individuals to compete in the marketplace and to make their product or service the most innovative and not the most exclusive. This country has been served well by its innovation and it is up to programs like ConnectKentucky and Connected Nation to keep America strong and growing.

Sincerely,

Brent Graden
City of Prestonsburg

