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Chairman Folmer and members of the Committee, I am Joe Fuhr, professor of economics at Widener University in Chester, PA.

The demand for wireless communications has grown and is growing tremendously. It has become essential in personal, business and emergency communications. The rapid adoption of wireless technology is enabling residents of the Commonwealth to pursue job opportunities while also improving public safety, creating more educational opportunities and facilitating widespread access to online healthcare. It has been well-documented that investment in wireless technology creates jobs.

Without better access to collocated facilities public safety would be compromised as more than 70% of 911 calls are originating from wireless devices. Not only that, but firefighters, police, paramedics, and other first responders are now reliant on wireless devices capable of accessing the Internet.

The capacity to supply wireless technology is reaching its limits as there is the likelihood of a spectrum shortage. However, this is a problem which the FCC is addressing and will take awhile to solve. So given this potential shortage we need to allocate the limited spectrum in the most efficient manner and do it quickly. Collocation and streamlining the procedure for reviewing applications can address the issue quickly and you have the power to address this important issue.

Collocation is a viable alternative to improve coverage to wireless customers. Given the need for more capacity in wireless, collocation can more efficiently use the limited capacity. Collocation will permit and expedite the build-out of much needed wireless infrastructure in Pennsylvania. This build-out will result in Pennsylvanians experiencing more reliable coverage, faster download speeds, and better call quality.

Building new towers will cost considerably more than collocation which makes better use of existing facilities. Further, constructing new towers takes considerable time. Also, regulatory hurdles must be overcome in the construction of new towers; they must be approved through zoning issues which often can last several years, increasing the cost to both the government and the companies which is passed on to the consumers in the form of higher prices and taxes. The use of collocation simply streamlines zoning and environmental issues and it increases capacity immediately. Finally, collocation is environmentally friendly as it decreases the need for the construction of redundant towers.

Consumers no longer look at wireless as a luxury but also as a necessity. Wireless was once used only for phone calls but today the use of wireless has been extended to texting, internet downloads apps, mhealth and various other functions. Many people no longer have a fixed telephone line and their only access is through a wireless connection. Adults in wireless-only households rose from 9% in 2007 to 16.5% by June of 2010. Consistent with this statistic Pennsylvanians are embracing wireless technology and increasingly accessing the Internet via smartphones. The proliferation of mobile Internet devices and services is beginning to stretch Pennsylvania's wireless infrastructure. If wireless infrastructure fails to keep up with rising usage, wireless coverage will diminish and capacity will be constrained, leaving citizens and businesses in Pennsylvania with substandard access to the wireless services they demand.

Facilitating collocation of wireless facilities in Pennsylvania will help avoid the wireless tsunami that is quickly approaching and will thereby greatly benefit the citizens of the commonwealth.