RESOLUTION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BALANCED NATIONAL SPECTRUM POLICY THAT INCLUDES UNLICENSED ACCESS IN THE 5GHZ BAND TO MEET THE INCREASED DEMAND FOR WIRELESS TECHNOLOGIES

WHEREAS, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) recognizes that broadband and technology-enabled opportunities are essential to enabling African Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights;

WHEREAS, we must have policies that preserve and encourage continued private investment to deploy broadband technologies, support small and minority businesses and entrepreneurs participation in the digital economy, and equip minority communities with the skills and education to take advantage of these technologies;

WHEREAS, Wi-Fi spectrum in the 2.4 GHz band has become highly congested, especially in densely populated urban areas making it difficult for Wi-Fi providers to deliver the kinds and quality of service that consumers have come to expect and will only accelerate as the number of wireless devices continues to grow;

WHEREAS, the 5 GHz band has enormous potential to support continued growth in unlicensed wireless services, including the next generation of Wi-Fi which will create a platform for technological innovation, investment, and economic growth;

WHEREAS, the internet economy will reach $4.2 trillion in the G-20 economies and boast 3 billion users globally by 2016 and Wi-Fi is essential to unleashing the enormous economic potential of the internet in communities where broadband adoption lags;

WHEREAS, while according to a 2013 Pew survey more Americans are gaining access to broadband in their homes, adoption rates for African Americans and Latinos still lag those of whites by 10 to 20 percentage points respectively and when accounting for income only 54 percent of those with a household income under $30,000 had high speed broadband or a computer at home increasing the importance of Wi-Fi for these communities;

WHEREAS, broadband access through Wi-Fi is critical to empowering minority and minority women entrepreneurs to develop, grow and improve productivity of their businesses as well as strengthening U.S. competitiveness nationally and worldwide, as stated in NBCSL Resolution TST-14-43 “ENCOURAGING MINORITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MEDIA AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS;” and

WHEREAS, unlicensed Wi-Fi is a critical issue that, if left unresolved, will hinder the broadband industry’s ability to grow, innovate and compete; and limiting access to this important resource will jeopardize consumers’ ability to access Wi-Fi.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL)
supports the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)’s move to allocate additional spectrum for unlicensed use in order to meet increased demand for wireless technologies;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NBCSL agrees that the proliferation of smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices with internet access has grown significantly, placing a greater demand on both licensed and unlicensed spectrum, and adding additional capacity is essential to support continued innovation and achieve the potential to transform many different areas of the American economy by providing a platform for innovation and is likely to have a substantial impact on jobs, growth and investment;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NBCSL strongly believes that ensuring the long-term success of unlicensed services in the 5 Ghz band for Wi-Fi will enable the broadband industry to provide reliable and affordable services to broadband customers, particularly given communities of colors’ high usage of mobile broadband technology as a primary means of connecting to the internet with the majority of these connection now being Wi-Fi connections; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that NBCSL send a copy of this resolution to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States Congress, the Federal Communications Commission, State Legislatures and Governors.

SPONSOR: Delegate Michael L. Vaughn (MD)
Committee of Jurisdiction: Telecommunications, Science, and Technology Policy Committee
Certified by Committee Co-Chairs: Delegate Michael Vaughn (MD) and Senator Anastasia Pittman (OK)
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Ratification is certified by: Senator Catherine Pugh (MD), President