

# WASD Superintendent Speaks in Harrisburg on Broadband Access

February 16, 2022

—BY WARREN HOWELER—



Dr. Jason Bottiglieri

Wyalusing Area School District Superintendent Dr. Jason Bottiglieri made the trip to Harrisburg Tuesday, where he spoke alongside PA Gov. Tom Wolf at a press conference to celebrate the creation of the state's new broadband development authority.

The new agency will manage at least \$100 million in federal funds to improve broadband Internet access across the state.

Bottiglieri was representing the PA Association of Rural and Small Schools at the event.

"It is alarming that still today, I hear the troubling stories of rural communities where Internet access remains unavailable," he said. "The fact that this is still an issue plaguing rural communities in our commonwealth is simply unacceptable."

While nearly every Pennsylvanian has likely experienced a dropped cell phone call or experienced frustration with an Internet outage at one time or another, the state's rural communities deal with these issues on a daily basis, Bottiglieri explained.

"Imaging learning in that environment," he said. "Imagine working or running a business in that environment. Imagine not having access to conduct medical research or being denied equal access to quality doctors and mental health services that can be delivered via telemedicine. We cannot allow a child's zip code to dictate their success."

Officials from the governor's office noted that at least 500,000 state residents are without broadband Internet access.

Such access is as essential today "as electricity and water," said Wolf.

“But there is a digital divide in PA,” he said. “This broadband authority will close the divide and ensure consistent, affordable, quality statewide broadband to keep children learning, businesses growing and opportunities abounding for all Pennsylvanians.”

The PA Broadband Development Authority consists of 11 members.

That board includes the secretaries of the state’s departments of agriculture, community and economic development, education, general services, and budget; the executive director for the Center for Rural PA; chairperson from the PA Utilities Commission and four legislative members.