



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR GINA M. RAIMONDO

Dear Colleague,

Rhode Island is strong, and getting stronger. The economy is moving forward and has already regained the private sector jobs that were lost during the recession. Rhode Islanders are getting back to work – today's unemployment rate is the lowest we've seen in almost a decade, and the number of unemployed residents has similarly dropped to a multi-year low.

But there's still work to be done. According to the Pew Research Center, 80% of students need the Internet to complete their homework and 90% of job applications are submitted online. Troublingly, nearly 26% of Rhode Island's households aren't connected to the Internet, meaning 263,432 people don't have access to an essential resource for education and employment.

The digital divide is stifling our students' progress and holding back a significant portion of the workforce. Closing the gap is critical to ensuring that Rhode Islanders can compete in the new skills economy and are prepared for the jobs we're creating. To answer this challenge, and others like it, we need to build on our existing momentum and employ bold solutions that address issues head-on, like ConnectRI.

ConnectRI is a collaboration between the Rhode Island Office of Innovation, Rhode Island Housing, and EveryoneOn, a national nonprofit, that aims to bring high speed broadband to every Rhode Island household. Through the initiative, we will begin to shrink the digital divide by offering high-speed, low-cost Internet service, computers, and at-home digital literacy courses to Rhode Islanders in need.

Public and private housing agencies have existing relationships with many of our state's least connected residents, and those conduits are crucial to the success of this endeavor. Your partnership will allow us to identify and assist those Rhode Islanders who will benefit most from ConnectRI. To that end, housing agency staff will be trained to seamlessly incorporate the ConnectRI initiative into existing workflows.

I'm confident that ConnectRI will empower Rhode Islanders to be more independent, economically productive and successful over the long-term. I encourage you to join me and commit your support to ConnectRI. Together, we can build a better future for our state.

Our team will be sharing details about ConnectRI at the upcoming PHARI and IREM meetings, but more information can be found online at <http://innovate.ri.gov/connectri>.

Sincerely,

Gina M. Raimondo
Governor